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Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7129th meeting

Friday, 7 March 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Asselborn/Ms. Lucas/Mr. Maes/Mr. Flies .... (Luxembourg)

Members:		
	Argentina	Mr. Timerman
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Errázuriz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Mr. Germanas
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Powers

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Letter dated 1 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2014/144)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Letter dated 1 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2014/144)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the following countries to participate in this meeting: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda and Uruguay.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF; and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2014/149, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I also wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/144, which contains a letter dated 1 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and I now give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn of Luxembourg for organizing this important thematic debate.

I have just returned from Sierra Leone. That country is an important case study in the value of our engagement. Under the guidance of the Security Council, with the solidarity of the international community and the strong engagement of the Sierra Leonean people, we are seeing a remarkable transformation.

The Council took a series of wise and timely decisions to deploy successive peacekeeping and political operations, along with support for long-term development. The United Nations also helped the Government to set up the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which helped the country and contributed to international jurisprudence. The Special Court and our peacekeeping and political missions have closed, but the United Nations country team will continue to support Sierra Leone on the road to peace and development.

Not long ago, Sierra Leone was engulfed in war and synonymous with the tragic plight of children in armed conflict. As the former child soldier Ishmael Beah said,

> "Somebody being shot in front of you, or you yourself shooting somebody, became just like drinking a glass of water. Children who refused to fight, kill or showed any weakness were ruthlessly dealt with. Emotions weren't allowed."

We have another successful young man, Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, with us today. The first former child soldier to address the Security Council (see S/PV.4422) is back to address us today.

Those transformative examples attest to the fact that, given a chance, former child soldiers can rebuild their lives and help to build peace in their countries.

(*spoke in French*)

Fifteen years have passed since the Security Council adopted resolution 1261 (1999), its first thematic resolution on the plight of children in armed conflict. By means of that resolution, the international community sent a clear signal: the suffering of children in armed conflict is unacceptable, whether they be child soldiers, sex slaves, victims in schools and hospitals or affected in any way. Such attacks violate the most basic human rights. They also threaten the achievement of lasting peace and development.

I thank the Security Council for having taken decisive action in establishing a solid framework to help children affected by armed conflict. The Council has developed practical tools to prevent serious violations against children, combat them and put an end to them. The monitoring and reporting mechanism shows how tragic the situation of children who are victims of armed conflict is.

The special teams working at the country level and supported by United Nations bodies promote dialogue with the parties to conflict, which is essential. Those teams are monitoring the situation closely and contribute to implementing action plans.

It is also important that child protection be an integral part of the activities of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, which means that members of those contingents must be trained prior to deployment and that the necessary resources be systematically established.

Yesterday, at the launch of the campaign "Children, not soldiers", which is supported by my Special Representative, UNICEF and other partners, the Member States concerned renewed their commitment to the action plan. I welcome that initiative. I ask the international community to provide assistance to those States and make that a priority. The United Nations system will seek to mobilize other non-State actors to put an end to the recruitment of children.

(*spoke in English*)

All children deserve and are entitled to protection, not exploitation. They belong in school, not armies and fighting groups. Children should be armed with pens and textbooks, not guns and grenades.

That brings me to the question of schools and hospitals. Those should be places where children can learn and receive care in safety. That is why our peacekeeping policy prevents any military use of schools by peacekeepers. In too many war zones around the world, schools and hospitals have been targeted or caught in the cross-fire. Those are egregious violations of the rights of the child to education, health and life.

In Syria today, some 40 per cent of public hospitals have stopped functioning. Many more are damaged. In some areas, more than half the doctors have left. More than 2.25 million children are out of school. One in five schools has been damaged or occupied by families made homeless by the conflict.

I am heartened that the draft resolution to be adopted by the Council today seeks to encourage the development of voluntary guidelines to prevent the military use of schools in conflict areas. I urge Member States to commit to greater protection for those essential facilities in conflict zones by all parties.

Let us also intensify efforts to ensure that perpetrators of grave violations against children are brought to justice. That includes assisting affected States to hold perpetrators accountable.

The draft resolution before the Council provides valuable new impetus to the Council's work to protect children in armed conflict. I count on the Council to use all the tools at its disposal to protect children on the front lines of conflict and to prevent a new generation from having to endure the same privations. Let our children be children — safe and secure, living lives of dignity and opportunity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Zerrougui.

Ms. Zerrougui: Let me start by thanking the delegation of Luxembourg for hosting this open debate during its presidency and for its invaluable work as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

This open debate comes at a crucial time when there is an upsurge in conflict in many places around the world. Roughly two months have passed in the year

2014. Taking stock of what this year has brought for children so far yields a dire conclusion.

In South Sudan, a new nation's horizon darkened in December 2013. Even today we have not yet grasped the extent of the grave violations against children committed in the renewed violence. Not only have tens of thousands of children been displaced, deprived of education and separated from their families and social networks, they have also recruited, used in horrific fighting, maimed or killed or forced to kill and maim. Initial reports I have received on raids on hospitals, including summary executions of the sick and old, leave me without words. When we think of South Sudan, we have to bear in mind that more than half of the population are children. A whole generation that should be entrusted with building a new nation is about to be deprived of a fair chance to do so.

As the Security Council was briefed in-depth yesterday (see S/PV.7128), the situation in the Central African Republic remains tragic. Its impact on children continues to be devastating. Resources are too limited to address the challenge of providing assistance and protection to thousands of children, including those recruited and used by parties to the conflict. I hope that the Security Council will address this situation with a robust response providing the actors on the ground with the necessary means and capacity.

In Syria, despite all the efforts of various actors, armed violation has intensified. The killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals continue unabated. Children are recruited and used by various armed groups, and are often lured into battle, where they are among the first to die. Reports of organized sexual violence as a tactic of humiliation persist. While humanitarian access in limited areas is a glimmer of hope in the darkest of times, the hardships of children have barely improved. We cannot afford a lost generation in Syria.

These first two months of 2014 have revealed once again that we must not rely on hope when children suffering in armed conflict are calling upon us to be heard. Only action and concrete measures will ultimately make a difference; only action and concrete measures will allow us to look back at 2014 and conclude that we, together, had made a difference for children this year.

Since the creation of my mandate by the General Assembly, we have seen such concrete action. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has adopted a number of conclusions over the past year, urging parties to conflict to end and prevent grave violations and calling for country-specific action. The Working Group has also visited Myanmar to assess the situation and advocate for the plight of children. The Security Council has continued to mainstream the children and armed conflict issue into both thematic and country-specific agendas, addressing new trends when and where they arise with new and innovative measures. I hope that the Council will do so again if the draft resolution before it is adopted.

I dearly welcome the endorsement of the "Children, not soldiers" campaign. It was before the Council that I first expressed my intent to work towards child-free Government armed forces by the end of 2016. It is my firm belief that this goal is an achievable one. Eight national Government forces remain on the Secretary-General's list for this violation. Yesterday, I had the honour to welcome representatives from each of these Governments at the launch event for the "Children, not soldiers" campaign. The commitment shown by the Member States concerned is a powerful message to the international community and parties to conflict — State and non-State actors alike — all over the world. It is time to make child soldiers history. I want to stress here that the "Children, not soldiers" campaign is not only a joint effort of my Office and UNICEF; it must be a joint effort of all of us who have gathered here today.

We have already begun to establish road maps to expedite the implementation of action plans with parties listed. Road maps are set up jointly with the concerned Government to tackle priority issues and are based on a joint assessment of achievements made and existing gaps in the implementation of agreed action plans. In Chad, the road map was agreed last year and is the basis for action taken. In Afghanistan, the road map has already been drafted jointly with Government representatives. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, too, we are close to the establishment of such a document. The sustained implementation of commitments agreed upon by the signatories to the action plan will ultimately lead to the better protection of children and the delisting of the concerned party from the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report.

In the course of the campaign, we have been able to benefit from the expertise of a variety of Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and child protection experts, giving us a better understanding of challenges and solutions alike. This enables us to even better protect children in unique cultural, economic, political and social contexts.

New partnerships and the strengthening of existing ones also lie at the heart of the implementation of resolution 1998 (2011). By taking the lead with UNICEF in drafting a guidance on how to monitor and report attacks on schools and hospitals, threats and attacks against education and health-care-related personnel, and the military use of schools, we have reached out to specialized United Nations agencies and NGOs that in turn will adopt the children and armed conflict agenda in their own programmes and projects. New stakeholders are thereby won for our cause, and we learn to understand how our cause can strengthen theirs. The guidance on the implementation of resolution 1998 (2011), which we intend to launch in the coming weeks, will mark another important step forward.

I am heartened by the fact that the Security Council has strengthened the language on the military use of schools in today's draft resolution. As members know, military use puts schools and school children in danger. We would like to see schools not become potential battlefields. Seeking ways to better prevent attacks on schools calls for efforts to incrementally prevent their military use by parties to conflict.

My Office and all other child protection actors at the United Nations Headquarters level — including UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs — will continue to stand ready and support the task forces with all means possible. However, it is impossible to monitor and report on violations against children in conflict and to address such violations appropriately without the necessary capacity on the ground. Almost weekly, task force members approach my Office and plead for the continued support in advocacy for enhanced capacity in child protection. We must be able to respond to their pleas with adequate resources and innovative models drawing from past experiences.

It is also important to mainstream child protection into peacekeeping and special political missions through the predeployment training of troops. I cannot stress enough in this regard the importance of knowing that the Security Council stands behind this. We owe it to the children affected by armed conflict and to the dedicated men and women putting their own lives at risk to ensure that the voices of these children reach our ears.

I began my statement with a grim picture in three situations of conflcit. But children face similar atrocitiets in many other conflicts. We must not leave them in despair. Today we know that measures can be taken successfully to end and prevent grave violations against children in armed conflict. Dialogue with non-State actors, engagement with Governments, capactiy-building on all levels and the mainstreaming of our agenda into all aspects of peace and security continue. Those activities would be unthinkable without the framework developed by the Security Council in the past years. Hundreds of thousands of children have their eyes upon the Council as it continues to lead the way in protecting children from armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Zerrougui for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lake.

Mr. Lake: Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General, my friend and colleague Leila Zerrougui and you, Sir, for your leadership on this issue. Let me also commend and thank the Security Council for its nine resolutions to help end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and for giving voice to those children through this debate. I look forward to hearing from Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, who in 2001, at the age of 14, became the first-ever former child soldier to brief the Council (see S/PV.4422), and who now supports former child soldiers in Sierra Leone. My remarks will be as brief as they are heartfelt.

When children are killed in indiscriminate attacks on schools or hospitals, when a boy is maimed by a landmine, when rape is both a weapon as well as a crime — the world is rightly outraged. But what of the atrocity of a boy being recruited at gun-point into an armed group; of a girl kidnapped from her school, traumatized by abuse and then given a gun and made to fight; or of any armed force sending children to battle to kill and die? In that regard, too, our outrage must be matched by action to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict anywhere and to support survivors while giving them the tools they need to rebuild their own lives and the future of their societies.

In recent years, the world has made real progress: better documenting and responding to grave violations against children; holding perpetrators accountable through investigations, prosecutions and disciplinary measures such as those imposed by national authorities in Colombia, Myanmar and Siena Leone; and developing effective responses, including counselling and vocational training, to help children break the physical and psychological bonds that have imprisoned their lives and threatened their futures. But more must be done. Just as the global community has a responsibility to end grave violations against children, each nation, too, has a responsibility to keep children from entering the ranks of its armed forces in the first place, as does every armed group.

Focused national action is at the heart of our new advocacy effort entitled "Children, not soldiers", through which United Nations agencies are working in partnership with eight Governments to prevent and end the recruitment and use of children in Government forces. Six of those countries — Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia and South Sudan — have signed action plans with concrete, time-bound steps to make that happen. Yemen is finalizing its plan, and the Sudan is now in discussions with the United Nations to develop its plan. But Governments cannot be asked to act alone. To translate those plans into measurable action, the United Nations must continue to provide resources, advice and technical assistance to help Governments identify and release children from their ranks and establish measures to prevent children from ever entering those ranks again.

Verifying the ages of soldiers is an important first step. With United Nations support, Chad accelerated efforts to screen its troops last year, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been working closely with United Nations agencies to identify and release children from its security forces. Birth registration, a child's passport to protection, is also essential. The action plans developed by both Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo include national birth registration campaigns to register every child.

Prevention also requires greater awareness at the community level. The Government of Myanmar joined forces with the United Nations to invest in a television, radio and billboard campaign to inform communities that child recruitment was prohibited, along with a phone number to report cases.

Beyond prevention, we cannot forget the specific needs of child soldiers who are emerging from conflict and need help in reintegrating into society. A country that invests in counselling, educating and training those children is not only investing in their futures, but in its own future as well. That is why UNICEF is working closely with countries to support their efforts to educate and train those children, helping them find a place in their communities.

On a recent visit to the Central African Republic a few weeks ago, I met a young woman who was 14 years old when she joined the Séléka. Without training, she was thrust directly into battle, fighting on the front lines against Government forces and witnessing acts of violence and atrocities no child should ever see. I asked her about her hopes for the future now that she was free. She told me that she wanted to be reunited with her parents, who remained missing. With the support of social workers, that young woman will soon begin professional training, still haunted by the nightmare that she has endured, but dreaming, too, of a better future for herself, her family, when she finds them, and, indeed, her country. Her story personifies horror but also hope: the horrors faced by children associated with armed forces and groups but also the hope that, with support, investment and encouragement, we can help these young men and women rebuild their lives, transform themselves and their societies and help their countries emerge from the shadow of conflicts that have included the horror of children losing their childhoods and even their lives.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Lake for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sawaneh.

Mr. Sawaneh: My name is Alhaji Babah Sawaneh. I have come from Sierra Leone. I want to thank the Luxembourg Mission to the United Nations and the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, for inviting me to participate today in this open debate. I also want to thank UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the United States Government for helping me to travel here. And I want to thank my own country and the Government of Sierra Leone. Most especially, I want to thank the Secretary-General for his recent to Sierra Leone, as well as for all the help provided.

In 2001, I was 14 years old when I was given an opportunity to come to New York to address the Security Council about my experience as a child soldier, and also about the status of children in armed conflict, especially in Sierra Leone. In my statement in 2001 (see S/PV.4422), I pleaded with the United

Nations to act firmly against those state actors that were in the habit of recruiting and using children in armed conflicts. I now serve as an example of a child who was forcefully abducted and conscripted into an armed group, at the age of 10. I was robbed of my youth by the Revolutionary United Front for two years. This was one of the most brutish and turbulent civil wars in the history of armed conflict, which was declared over in a ceremony entitled "War don don" — by then President Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabba in year 2002. I therefore draw the attention of the United Nations, especially that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, not only to hold accountable the individual actors who recruit and use children, but also to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in all armed conflicts.

Thirteen years ago, I stood before the Security Council, in this very Chamber, and I told my story about the war and how the children of Sierra Leone suffered. I asked the United Nations, on behalf of the children of Sierra Leone, to do everything possible to bring our sad story to an end, to help us find our way back to our communities and schools and to build a better life and a better future. The children and young people in countries affected by armed conflict need a future. We need education and jobs.

I stand here again today by the grace of God, again asking for the Council's help. Now after 13 years, I would like to tell the Council what happened to me. The story is not easy. I was able to return to school. With the help of my foster family and friends, I worked hard and did not give up. In 2011, two years ago, I finished my bachelor of social science degree in peace and conflict resolution in Fourah Bay College at the University of Sierra Leone. I chose to study those subjects. My thesis was about good governance and public sector reform. I learned about civil society and how to prevent conflict. I want to dedicate my life to this work and to speak on behalf of children and young people so that our story is known and our voices are heard.

In Sierra Leone, I was lucky to meet with people who were also dedicated to this work. Last year in Freetown, I met General Romeo Dallaire, the founder of the Child Soldiers Initiative, and participated in training for the security sector — the police, the military and other officials — to prevent the recruitment of children in armed conflict. I helped to organize the training and assisted the children who came to tell their stories. The aim was to build knowledge in the security sector to protect children and prevent recruitment.

The story does not stop there. There is much more that we need to do and to accomplish. Really, we are still at the beginning of our work. Today there are many children in desperate need of our help. In countries, regions and around the world children are experiencing violence and conflict. We need to work hard to protect them.

I want to continue my work in peacebuilding when I return to Freetown. It is partly about the security sector, but it is also about our communities and our Government and about finding real opportunities for the future. Today, many children are not in school and many young people are not able to find work. I call on Council members to please use the microphones they have before of them to speak out to help solve those problems. We need to speak out, and we need to take action to change the equation. We need to stop war and the violations against children, especially the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts.

Yesterday, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF launched a campaign entitled "Children, not soldiers". The campaign will end the use of child soldiers by Government armed forces. It is a huge job, but it is possible. However, even that is not enough. We also have to stop armed groups from recruiting children. Based on my personal experience, I know it is a long story. Today there are many children in many countries who have similar stories.

Fifteen years ago there were child soldiers in Sierra Leone. I was one of those children. Today Sierra Leone is child-soldier-free. Therefore, it is possible to change one country at a time.

Looking back on the 13 years since I was last here speaking to the Security Council (see S/PV.4422), I can tell members that it has been really a struggle for me. I have achieved a lot, but still there is so much we need to do. No one can do this work alone. We have to come together in order to succeed.

I thank all members for inviting me to participate in this important open debate. I hope to see the end of child recruitment by armed forces by 2016, and then the end of all child soldiers. That is what we must do. I am asking for the Council's help on behalf of all children affected by armed conflicts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Sawaneh for his moving and very inspiring briefing.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Australia, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in French*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2143 (2014).

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Luxembourg.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNICEF and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their briefings and testimony.

What makes the suffering of a child revolting, Albert Camus wrote, is the fact that the suffering is not justified. The suffering is all the more revolting and the less justified when it does not result from the misfortunes of human life but from the hatred of humankind. Each of us instinctively feels that every child maimed or wounded by war wounds our own innocence and shakes our faith in humankind. That is why the international community now unanimously shares the conviction that children deserve to be protected from the impact of conflict. Yet instances of violations against children are unfortunately far too numerous and revolting.

When the Security Council turned its attention to the issue of children in armed conflict 15 years ago, all attention was focused on what was then commonly called "child soldiers", an ambiguous and simplistic term. Today, the campaign launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in cooperation with UNICEF and other United Nations partners, reminds us, by the simplicity of its title — "Children, not soldiers" — that children are not meant to be soldiers, even if an assault rifle is placed in their hands. I very much hope that the campaign, which was officially launched yesterday at United Nations Headquarters, will be supported by all Member States. Only a true collective commitment will make Governments' recruitment of children and their use on the battlefield become part of history.

But Governments are not the only ones recruiting children to bolster their armed forces. The vast majority of the parties listed in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General are non-State armed groups, like the rebels who abducted Alhaji Babah Sawaneh and forced him to fight in Sierra Leone. It is therefore important that the international community does not lose sight of the abuses committed by such armed groups against children and tackles them with equal determination.

Recruitment is not the only danger to which children are exposed. Violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict can take many forms. But whether they become victims of bombings or crossfire, are subjected to sexual violence or are recruited to serve in the ranks of armed forces or groups as combatants, or are held as sex slaves, each fate tells the story of a life shattered.

In the Syrian refugee camps in Turkey, I met the haggard look of orphans — it was a blank stare, hinting at all of the horrors they had seen. The Syrian conflict has forced close to 2.5 million people, half of whom are children, to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. More than 10,000 children have died; more than 10,000 lives have been crushed by the Syrian conflict without any chance of flourishing. And how many hundreds of thousands more children will be affected, until the end of their days, by wounds to their hearts and bodies, as well as their souls, that were inflicted by the conflict — the wounds of those who witnessed unspeakable atrocities, were tortured by Government forces or were forced to fight in armed groups.

Given the urgency of the humanitarian situation, one is tempted to diminish the importance of children's rights such as the right to education or the right to health. That would be a mistake. Thousands of schools are closed, as they are being used for military purposes. With nearly 3,000 schools damaged and school attendance in a downward spiral, an entire generation of Syrians risks illiteracy, seriously jeopardizing chances of the country's socioeconomic recovery.

Hospitals and other health facilities have been targeted and the medical staff threatened and decimated. Currently, it is estimated that 60 per cent of all public hospitals have been affected by the conflict, with almost 40 per cent of them out of service. Childhood diseases that were thought to be eradicated, like poliomyelitis, have reappeared and pose a danger to public health.

Attacks against schools and hospitals, as well as the denial of humanitarian access, are among the six grave violations subject to systematic monitoring by the Security Council through its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which Luxembourg is honoured to chair. All violations against children deserve to be condemned with the same conviction.

The perpetrators of atrocities against children must answer for their actions. There can be no impunity for those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The International Criminal Court plays an important role in that respect, as shown in the cases of *Thomas Lubanga*, *Germain Katanga* and *Bosco Ntaganda*.

I cited the Syrian example but other situations also deserve our full attention. Violence in the Central African Republic has reached unprecedented levels of cruelty and brutality in recent months. Children have paid a very heavy price. Some have been decapitated, intentionally mutilated or wounded in crossfire. The number of children recruited has almost doubled since the upsurge in violence of 2013, thus obliterating the earlier progress made in demobilizing and reintegrating children.

It is estimated that 6,000 children are currently serving as soldiers in the Central African Republic. The Lord's Resistance Army, the most notable armed group in terms of child recruitment and barbaric war tactics, remains active in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. And its leader, Joseph Kony, remains free.

Strengthened efforts are necessary to fully implement the children and armed conflict agenda. We must build upon the shared conviction that children should not be recruited as soldiers, or killed or maimed, or sexually abused or abducted. Their right to humanitarian assistance, education and health care must guaranteed, as our goal will never be truly realized until we have ended all violence against children. All efforts must aim to ensure that their rights are fully respected, in times of war as in times of peace.

Resolution 2143 (2014), just adopted, reflects our shared determination to put an end to the violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict. I thank the members of the Council for supporting our initiative as well as the many Member States that demonstrated their commitment by becoming sponsors of the resolution.

Children embody the hope and future of any society. Destroying children destroys such hope. Protecting children will therefore protect the future.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the other members of the Security Council.

Mr. Timerman (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate your country, Sir, on its presidency of the Security Council during the month of March and to thank you for inviting me to participate in today's open debate on children and armed conflict. I also acknowledge the presence of the Deputy Minister of Lithuania and the other Permanent Representatives.

Allow me first to mention something of which we are proud. Next Tuesday, in the fraternal Republic of Chile, the democratic President, Sebastian Piñera Echeñique, will hand over the presidency to another democratically elected president. That is now a tradition in Latin America that fills us with pride and satisfaction. I therefore wish to acknowledge that publicly, before the Council and the entire Chilean people.

I also wish to express our absolute solidarity with the Government and people of the People's Republic of China, who recently suffered a dreadful attack.

I welcome Luxembourg's initiative to convene this debate on an issue on which the delegation of Argentina appreciates Luxembourg's leadership in the Council through Ambassador Sylvie Lucas. We also welcome the statements of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, whose dreadful history and moving words serve to challenge us to act urgently and with genuine conviction.

My country, Argentina, is firmly committed to the protection of children in armed conflict. That can be seen by the fact that we were one of the first States to ratify, in 2002, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the participation of children in armed conflict.

Similarly, we are committed to defending and ensuring respect for the rights of children and adolescents in every area, as is demonstrated in our Government's initiative, unanimously approved by

Argentina's Congress, enacting a law stipulating a minimum age of 18 for recruitment into our armed forces, thereby observing the highest standards on children's rights.

In August we will mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), the first on the issue of children and armed conflict, supported by Argentina as a member of the Security Countil at the time. In 2005, resolution 1612 (2005), also firmly supported by my country, as a non-permanent Council member, represented substantive progress in recognizing, guaranteeing and protecting the rights of children in situations of armed conflict. That resolution clearly defines acts that constitute serious violations of children's rights and establishes a monitoring and reporting mechanism that, in conjuntion with child protection advisers, is a fundamental tool for ensuring the protection of children in armed conflict.

Besides such advances in formulating standards, it is important to emphasize the goals that have been achieved in preventing attacks on and protecting children's rights, through coordinated action by the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, working together with UNICEF and other United Nations bodies. We certainly all believe that lessons well learned and good practices established not only apply to legal standards and effective mechanisms but also to the decision to implement action plans in a coordinated way that can have a positive impact on children's living conditions and their future in specific situations.

Such steps on the part of the international community to protect children from serious crimes and prevent such crimes being committed go hand in hand with the importance of ensuring that impunity does not prevail and that the perpetrators of serious violations of rights are held accountable for their actions. Fighting impunity for serious violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity is unquestionably the responsibility of individual States. It should be recalled, however, that the international system has provided supplementary mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) for cases where States are unable or unwilling to exercise their primary jurisdiction. The ICC is an essential body for ensuring that accountability is the standard and ethic for an international community that respects the rule of law.

Recognizing the progress that has been made does not imply in any way that we ignore or minimize the horrifying realities that daily attest to the fact that children and women are the primary victims of many types of violence and abuse in situations of armed conflict. From a human rights perspective, the protection of children must remain our priority, and must therefore be taken into consideration when defining the mandates of peacekeeping operations, special political missions and Security Council peacebuilding efforts, which should include the integration of experts into its various missions. It is equally important for States and the Organization that training and capacity-building on children and armed conflict not be limited exclusively to staff with direct responsibility for protecting children in the field.

It is also essential that we incorporate into training programmes for military, police and civilians destined for United Nations missions a human rights perspective and a thorough acquaintance with the rights of children and young people, as well as knowledge and understanding of strategies and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes for them in situations of armed conflict. Careful analysis of the various tactics for recruiting child soldiers and how to prevent their joining armed groups and conflicts, as well as the capacity to act to change violent cultural practices and traditions that perpetuate discrimination against children, is imperative. We must discard models of tutelage and recognize children as possessors of rights. In the area of potential specific measures we should also emphasize the importance of preventive measures that every State can adopt, including the implementation of a legal framework that ensures that children cannot be recruited as soldiers; in that instance, a proper registry of births is extremely valuable.

It is equally important to ensure recognition, within the framework of reintegration and reparation programmes for children who have been victims in situations of armed conflict, of their status as possessors of rights and of the fact that they are entitled to be actors and participants in decision-making processes — not only as regards their personal plans for their lives but also within their families, communities and societies. It is also essential that we overcome interventions and processes that solidify or reproduce patterns of victimization.

Argentina believes that the Convention on the Rights of the Child must inspire and guide our decisions both in peacetime and in situations of armed conflict. In peacetime, our primary responsibility is to promote, protect and ensure children's rights through public policies and legal guarantees. In situations of armed conflict, we must strengthen protection mechanisms, generate effective tools for prevention and ensure that specific action is taken to provide comprehensive care for children who are victims of armed conflict.

In that regard, and in conclusion, I would like to pay special tribute to the human rights movement in my country, and in particular to the Asociación Madres e Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, who, through their unwavering commitment to human rights, were the principal movers of the Argentine proposal that formed the basis for the inclusion of articles 7, 8 and 11 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. With the requirement that children should be registered immediately after birth and the commitment of States parties to the Convention to respect the right of a child to preserve his or her identity — measures that States must take to avoid children's illegal transfers abroad — the substance of those articles enshrines the rights of and for children that those women with their white scarves have sorrowfully and courageously handed down as a historical mandate and ethical commitment to political consistency and a legal obligation for humankind as a whole.

Lastly, I would like to assure the Council of my country's support for today's resolution 2143 (2014), of which Argentina is a sponsor.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): I would like to thank you and your delegation, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate, and in particular for your ambassador and Permanent Representative's unwavering dedication to promoting the rights and protection of children in armed conflict. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement, as well as his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, our friend Mr. Anthony Lake, for their briefings.

I would also like to thank our young brother and son, Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, for sharing with us his moving story about what he endured as a child soldier with the rebel forces in Sierra Leone. Indeed, his story resonates well with our own tragic past in Rwanda, where, in 1994, hundreds of thousands of children were arbitrarily killed, abducted or maimed, and others were forced to join the militia by the very same Government that was supposed to protect them.

It is unfortunate that today, millions of children are still caught in conflicts around the world, in which they are mere bystanders but targets. Some fall victim to a general onslaught against civilians. Others die as part of a calculated genocide, as was the case in Rwanda 20 years ago. Evidence of the plight of children is the death toll of civilians, which include a high number of children in places such as Syria, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan, to name a few. That is a gruesome reminder that children are the first victims, and that more remains to be done. Still more children suffer the effects of sexual violence of the multiple deprivations of armed conflicts that expose them to hunger or disease. As the Secretary-General correctly said, "Let our children be children".

I think that we are equally concerned with the persistent reports of widespread and deliberate atacks against schools, teachers and students as a tool of war. Whatever the causes of those attacks or occupation of schools, we call on belligerents to halt such inhumane acts and to publicy announce that children simply have no part in warfare and should therefore be in schools, not in the bushes.

Although adequate protection of children in situations of armed conflict should be the primary responsibility of Governments, we believe that all parties to conflict must deploy the necessary and sustained efforts in protecting children and abide by the relevant international obligations to desist from recruiting and attacking children. That is why we call for the universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Rwanda was one of the first countries in the world to ratify that Convention, which contains the core principles of helping children to meet their basic needs and ensuring that that they are protected from violence, abuse and exploitation and can reach their full potential.

Those principles are reflected in our national development programmes and are also evident in the Government's strong legal and policy framework, as well as the practical measures to protect children. We also welcome other positive developments, including the signing of action plans and some listed State and non-State parties as a unique tool that can successfully improve the situation in armed conflicts.

The signing of action plans by a number of Governments, in addition to the progress made by other parties in releasing children, is a good step in that regard. Rwanda strongly supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his recent report (see S/2013/245), especially his call on the donor community to enjoy a discussion to address the funding gaps for the implementation of the action plans and associated monitoring and to call on the Security Council to tackle the issue of persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children.

We take the opportunity to reiterate our call on concerned Member States to prioritize the implementation of those action plans. As the adopted resolution 2143 (2014) puts it, the important step is the development of national capacity-building as well as close cooperation with States for such implementation to materialize. In that context, post-conflict peacebuilding should include, among other priorities, issues of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the establishment of an adequate birth registration system that would help prevent future underage recruitment, as well as institutions of accountability, and the fight against impunity. The process of integration must help children to establish new foundations in life based on their individual capacities. Recovery and reintegration should take place in an environment that fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Before I conclude, I pay homage to the role played by regional and subregional organizations in meeting the challenges associated with the issue of children and armed conflict. Specifically for the African Union, we commend the aggressive protection mandates exercised in its peacekeeping missions, including under the African Union Mission in Somalia, the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Furthermore, we welcome the ongoing discussions on the alignment of the national legislations of African States with international instruments on child rights and training to troop-contributors to the African Union and United Nations peacekeeping missions. We also take this opportunity to call for the deployment of an adequate number of child protection advisers thoughout United Nations peacekeeping missions to cover child protection functions.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to affirm Rwanda's unequivocal support for the advancement of the child protection agenda both at home and regionally through our engagement with international community.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Ms. Zerrougui for her briefing and her tireless efforts on behalf of the world's young people. I also thank Executive Director Mr. Lake for his remarks and distinguished service. Special thanks go to the Foreign Ministers of Luxembourg and Argentina and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Lithuania for travelling here today and for lending his weight to addressing this critical issue.

I especially welcome Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, whose knowledge of the challenge that we are discussing today is so deeply personal. The events in Sierra Leone in the late 1990s did much to awaken the world to the dimensions of the tragedy of children and armed conflict. As a former child soldier abducted when he was just 10 years old, Alhaji's presence is a reminder that the principles that we refer to here are not abstracts. In fact, their implementation can spell the difference between hope and trauma and between life and death.

My colleague's few issues are of a graver humanitarian concern than the impact of armed conflict on civilians. The horror is especially acute when the victims or the perpetrators are boys and girls. In recent years, the tragic connection between children and war has assumed a prominent place on the global agenda. In 2008, the United States appoved the Child Soldiers Protection Act, which curtails United States military assistance, licences and sales to Governments that recruit or use child soldiers and which has given our diplomats leverage to engage constructively with Governments on the additional steps that they need to take.

In 2012, as one example, the United States withheld security assistance that the Democratic Republic of the Congo needed to develop a second light infantry battalion until the Government there signed an action plan with the United Nations to address the use and recruitment of child soldiers. Within just a couple of weeks, the Government signed the action plan and is now working with the United Nations in a sincere effort to address the challenge. In 2012, the International Criminal Court sent a welcome message when it found Thomas Lubanga guilty of forcibly conscripting child soldiers in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has launched a systematic campaign to help Governments and armed groups develop action plans to end the use of child soldiers, 18 of which have now been signed. Chad and Yemen are among the countries that have recently made a commitment to further progress. To that end, I commend Ambassador Lucas for leading a Security Council working group trip to Burma to review the country's effort to fulfil its action plan.

Rescuing children from armed conflict is not always a simple process, especially when they have experienced the trauma of direct involvement in violence. Reintegration requires careful planning, money and the recognition that some scars, whether of body or mind, will heal slowly, if at all

Yet for all the helpful activity, too many children are still being exploited, and some leaders have not thrown their weight behind eliminating this scourge. No State or armed group has yet been delisted by the Secretary-General and 28 of the 52 listed parties are persistent perpetrators, who have been listed for more than five years. The Sudan is the one listed Government that still has not signed an action plan. But even when plans are developed, they have value only if implemented. Donors can help by sharing resources, and the United Nations must provide assistance and monitoring.

The United States encourages the deployment of child protection advisers in all relevant United Nations missions. Further, we urge the United Nations to develop standardized training on child protection responsibilities so that United Nations peacekeepers who encounter violations respond effectively. These training standards should be shared with Member States, the African Union and other regional organizations involved in peacekeeping activities. All of us must press for the creation of birth registration systems in order to verify that a child is a child. As resolution 2143 (2014) does, we must each urge greater protections for schools, which are too often militarized.

Today, Syria is at ground zero of the most appalling humanitarian catastrophe of our era, and children, Syria's future, are among the principal victims. Since the civil war began, more than 10,000 boys and girls have been killed, more than 1.2 million have become refugees, and more than 3 million are unable to attend school. The United States is part of the United Nations-led "No lost generation" initiative that is striving to shield children from the fighting, reunite broken families and deliver opportunities for education. One four-year-old refugee in Turkey told UNICEF that he wants to become a surgeon so that he will be able to save his brother, who is still in Syria, should he get hurt.

According to the Secretary-General's report of 27 January (S/2014/31), the Government and extremist groups have inflicted direct and unspeakable violence against children, including kidnapping, torture, maiming and murder. Pro-Government forces have detained children as young as 11 for alleged association with the Opposition and subjected them to beatings and other brutal mistreatment in order to extract confessions. Both sides have prevented injured children from receiving medical treatment and both, but especially the Government, have launched indiscriminate attacks in which children and other civilians have been killed. Babies, some killed and others barely breathing, have been pulled from the rubble caused by barrel bombs.

On 22 February, the Council demanded a halt to such attacks and to the sieges that have forced many Syrians to choose between the certainty of starvation and the false promise of safety through surrender. The Al-Assad regime may be sure that our scrutiny of its actions as well as those of any who would recruit or target children will not let up until our demands are met and the savagery is stopped.

In recent months, the Central African Republic has also been the scene of horrific violence. The cycle of vengeance between the Séléka and anti-Balaka militias has been singularly repulsive in that nearly all of the victims on both sides have been unarmed. Children have been attacked, beaten, maimed, raped and killed, some by beheading. An estimated 6,000 young people have been recruited and trained to kill by armed groups, and in some cases girls have been forced into marriage.

In addition, the outlawed Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) remains a threat in the Central African Republic and parts of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is heartening that, in December, 19 soldiers, including six young boys, defected from the LRA, and that they cited radio broadcasting produced by invisible children as giving them the courage to take that brave step. It is encouraging as well that the LRA has been forced to break up into small groups and that in 2013 the number of their attacks went down. The level of deaths and abductions attributable to those attacks, however, remains far too high. The world must not rest until Joseph Kony and his clique have been held accountable and the LRA has become just a horrible memory.

Finally, in South Sudan, children are once again being made subject to all the ravages of war because the country's leaders have failed to settle their differences peacefully. Scared youngsters are wandering among the thousands of displaced persons, searching for their mommies and daddies. Our hearts go out to Mangok Bol, a former lost boy now living in Boston, who has returned to his home village in South Sudan to try to find his nieces and nephews who have been abducted by militants from a competing ethnic group.

When the 14 year-old Alhaji Babah Sawaneh testified before the Council in 2001, he said "taking my gun from me was a vital step" (*S/PV.4422, p. 8*). In that context, I commend the Special Representative for her "Children, not soldiers" campaign. Boys and girls belong in playgrounds, not battlegrounds. Around their young shoulders, they should have school backpacks, not ammunition belts. Their hearts should be filled with optimism and hope, not terror at what the next day may bring.

To make matters right for all of the world's children is a daunting mission, but none could be more worthy of our resources, our dedication or our time.

Mr. Germanas (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for hosting today's debate on children and armed conflict. I also thank all briefers for their extensive statements. Ambassador Lucas deserves particular recognition for her brilliant leadership. I also note with appreciation the work of the Special Representative and her team.

The 1996 study by Graça Machel entitled "Impact of armed conflict on children" (A/51/306) gave strong impetus to the strengthening of the United Nations system for the protection of children in armed conflict. The United Nations has made significant progress over the past decade and a half in protecting children. However, in nearly all recent conflicts, we are facing the horrific impact of conflicts on children.

Let me refer to just a few examples. The conflict in the Central African Republic has resulted in than 2 million children lacking basic services and hundreds of thousands with no access to education. In Syria, over 10,000 children have been killed and many more injured since March 2011. Nearly 3,000 schools have been destroyed, and 1,000 used as detention and torture centres. An estimated 2.26 million children were not attending school or attending irregularly. In the latest incident in Nigeria, 59 children were shot and burned, in the fourth school assault in less than a year.

The Security Council has undertaken many measures to end such grave violations against children. But as we see, they have not been enough. This shows that we must take more active action against these crimes. Our agenda should be further developed and our instruments sharpened. In this regard, I welcome the new language of the resolution responding to the changing dynamics on the ground.

I would like to touch on three specific issues: attacks on schools, the implementation of action plans, and combating impunity.

Firstly, the growing use of schools for military purposes and increase in attacks on schools have not only severely disrupted children's right to access to education but are a violation of international humanitarian law. Schools must enjoy immunity from war. Impunity for violence against children at schools, as well as the lack of access to education due to fear of attacks, must be addressed by the Council. Monitoring, assessment and reporting are crucial in this regard. Some progress has been made, but we need to do more to strengthen monitoring and reporting partnerships to improve data collection and verification. Dialogue between local community leaders, armed groups and Government forces and officials is also very important, as is strengthening legislation, in this regard.

We welcome the development of guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict. These could guide States to improve their domestic legislation and military doctrines. Some countries have already introduced legislation and relevant practices restricting and prohibiting the military use of schools. The Philippines restricted the use of schools by their armed forces. Most recently, South Sudan prohibited its armed forces from using schools.

Secondly, I would like to underline the significance of action plans as a key tool for ending the recruitment and use of children. Signing a plan is only the beginning. Implementation will require political will as well as resources. The deployment of United Nations child protection advisers and assistance for national capacity-building are very important. On the other hand, we also encourage the Special Representative to continue her engagement with non-State armed groups to conclude action plans. Attacks on schools must be included in action plans.

Yesterday, the Office of Special Representative, in cooperation with UNICEF, launched the "Children, not soldiers" campaign. It is essential that the initiative find its practical application in respective national action plans. Regional and subregional organizations have a role to play in that regard. The agreement signed between the United Nations and the African Union will help to strengthen the protection of conflict-affected children.

Thirdly, accountability for the perpetrators of violations against children should be strengthened. Ending violations does not necessarily mean the end of impunity. The criminalization of child recruitment under national laws, with the capacity to prosecute those responsible, would send a signal that crimes against children will not be tolerated. Where national authorities are unwilling or unable to bring perpetrators to justice, international justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, should play a role.

Targeted measures against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children remain an important tool at the Council's disposal. Violence against children should be included in targeted sanctions designation criteria. The need to consider targeted measures against perpetrators in situations where a dedicated sanctions committee does not exist is also very important.

The late President Nelson Mandela said that we owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear. We have to act for all those children, and we must follow those wise words.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Anthony Lake and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their statements today.

I align myself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

I take this opportunity to once again congratulate Luxembourg on its outstanding work on children in armed conflict, which led to the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014) today.

For 15 years, the Council has been mobilized for the protection of children in conflict. From that mobilization a global system has been born and has led to the demobilization of tens of thousands of child soldiers. Today, Ms. Zerrougui and Mr. Lake have provided evidence that that mobilization continues apace. Their "Children, not soldiers" campaign offers us hope for a world where national armies no longer recruit child soldiers. To achieve that, the full cooperation of the States concerned will be crucial. The United Nations has a powerful instrument in that regard, and one that has shown its effectiveness. The action plans allowed two States to be removed from the list of infamy in 2012. In the near future, other States will hopefully follow the same path. Our procedures are therefore working.

Children are, unfortunately, still the first victims in today's conflicts when they are forcibly enlisted as combatants. In the Central African Republic, as we know, the armed groups, including the ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka, have more than 6,000 children among their ranks. France will shortly present a draft resolution for the deployment of a peacekeeping operation in that country. But the seriousness and urgency of the situation require that the resources of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic be enhanced as of now, especially for the protection of children, as provided for in resolution 2134 (2014).

Children are also at risk when their education is threatened. Schools are increasingly the target of intolerable attacks. They are burned, destroyed and caught in the middle of crossfire. Yet international humanitarian law sets out a clear rule: schools cannot be military objectives.

In Syria, this has been the sad reality for children for three years. The regime's indiscriminate aerial bombings, which were recently unanimously denounced by the Security Council in resolution 2139 (2014), have deprived an entire generation of their right to education. More than 3,000 schools have been destroyed. More than 2 million Syrian children no longer attend school. We also condemn all violations by the armed groups against children. There is an ongoing dialogue between the Free Syrian Army and the United Nations on the issue of child recruitment. We encourage Ms. Zerrougui to continue that dialogue with a view to signing an action plan.

The Council recently held an open debate on the rule of law (see S/PV.7113). Our debate today allows us to lay out in a concrete manner an essential aspect of the rule of law — the need for States to keep rigorous birth records, which is essential to eliminating the phenomenon of child soldiers as it sheds light on that practice and allows it to be fully understood. We must also have in mind the situation in the Central African Republic, where Séléka fighters have systematically destroyed the country's archives, thereby depriving all citizens, first and foremost children, of access to the rule of law.

In the fight for child protection, the fight against impunity plays a vital role. The fact that the International Criminal Court issued its first conviction against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, who was found guilty of conscripting and enlisting children under 15 years of age, was a decisive step. France welcomes the fact that the resolution adopted today highlights the role of justice, in particular that of the International Criminal Court. We all recognize the complementary role of national courts and want them to further strengthen their efforts against the most serious crimes. But when the courts fail, the International Criminal Court is our guarantee that an independent and permanent remedy exists.

Our tireless efforts must continue. In that regard, I would highlight several issues.

First, on the role of the Secretariat, we are aware of Mr. Ban Ki-Moon's commitment to the Organization being irreproachable. Security sector reform and demobilization and reintegration efforts must fully include the issue of child soldiers. In that respect, Lieutenant-General Dallaire has become an advocate of training programmes, and we commend him for that new commitment, which is reflected in our resolution.

Secondly, on the protection of education in conflict, France follows with interest the work of non-governmental organizations to develop guidelines on the military use of schools. States must be encouraged to work alongside civil society to develop best practices that are adapted to the operational realities on the ground to improve the protection of education in times of conflict.

Finally, France continues to call on all States to endorse the Paris Principles, which complement the work of the Security Council. We want to suggest, along with Ms. Zerrougui, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, that a regional seminar on the Paris Principles be held this summer in Africa to support Ms. Zerrougui's campaign in the region.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation welcomes the initiative taken by Luxembourg to convene today's meeting. I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Asselborn, who has come to New York to preside over our meeting. I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Zerrougui; and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Lake, for their briefings. China also listened carefully to the statement by Mr. Sawaneh.

Children represent our future and our hope. Ensuring their safe growth is the common responsibilty of national Governments and the international community. In recent years, the international community has made tremendous efforts and achieved positive progress in protecting children in armed conflict. However, with the increasing complexity of conflict situations, in many regions of the world, children still bear the brunt of armed conflict, and their overall situation is still worrisome.

China opposes and condemns all violations against children in armed conflict and urges all parties to conflict to abide by the relevant international laws, fulfil their obligations and respect and protect the rights of children. The Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2143 (2014) clearly demonstrates the international community's strong commitment to strengthening the protection of children in armed conflict. We support the international community in continuing its common effort in providing comprehensive protection of children in armed conflict.

In that regard, I wish to underscore the following three points. First, the Governments concerned bear the primary responsibility for the protection of children in armed conflict. The key to the implementation of Council resolutions on the protection of children lies in the active support and cooperation of the Governments concerned. On the basis of full respect for the ownership of the countries concerned and through in-depth communication and coordination with them, the international community should support the countries concerned in strengthening their capacity-building and help them to resolve their practical financial and technological difficulties. The international community should also do its utmost to put an end to violations against children by armed groups.

Secondly, in order to protect children in armed conflicts, the various bodies within the United Nations system should work on the basis of their own responsibilities and strengths, fulfil their respective mandates and generate synergy. The Security Council should effectively fulfil its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security and reduce and curb conflicts through good offices, negotiations and mediation so as to create a safe environment for the growth of children. United Nations peacekeeping operations should act in accordance with the Council's mandate and increase their protection for children. We welcome the "Children, not soldiers" campaign launched yesterday jointly by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts and UNICEF. We hope that by 2016 we will reach the goal of complete elimination of child soldiers in national armies.

Thirdly, in order to protect children in armed conflict, we should address both the symptoms and the root causes. The international community should make the protection of children an integral part of its overall effort to address conflicts and give it its full attention in political negotiations and peace agreements. In promoting post-conflict reconstruction and implementing peacebuilding strategies, the international community should prioritize children's return to school and reintegration into society and strengthen the institution-building of countries concerned in terms of protecting children, providing adequate resources and increasing development assistance. It should actively support countries concerned in their efforts to eliminate poverty, realize universal education and protect children's rights so as to eliminate the root causes of conflicts.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I would like to thank Luxembourg and you personally, Madam President, for your decisive leadership on the compelling challenge of children in armed conflict. I thank the Secretary-General and Executive Director Lake for their statements, and Special Representative Zerrougui for her tireless exemplary efforts. I would particularly like to thank Alhadji Babah Sawaneh for his personal account. We so often talk in the abstract in this Chamber. We need to hear from individuals like Alhadji — powerful beacons of a better future — much more often.

We know that armed conflict continues to have a horrific impact on children, so many of whom are recruited or used by armed forces and armed groups. There are reportedly some 6,000 child soldiers in the Central African Republic. Thousands of children are killed in deliberate attacks on civilian areas or caught in the crossfire. Over 10,000 have already lost their lives in the Syrian conflict. Many children are abducted and subjected to sexual violence. Attacks on schools and hospitals continue to deny children an education and desperately needed health care. The denial of humanitarian assistance is depriving children of food and basic necessities. That is a terrible stain on our efforts for peace and security.

I would like to touch on three areas where greater efforts are needed to protect children during armed conflict: ending recruitment by Government forces and non-State armed groups, addressing the military use of schools, and ensuring accountability. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui has noted, eight Government armed forces are listed in the Secretary-General's most recent report (see S/2013/245) as having recruited or used children. Six of those Governments have committed, through the signing of action plans, to ending that practice. The aim of ending child recruitment by Government forces therefore appears achievable, and we strongly support the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, launched yesterday, to reach that goal by 2016. We welcome the restatement of commitment to that aim made by the eight States affected yesterday. In our own region, we are pleased to be supporting UNICEF's efforts to help the Myanmar Government implement its action plan to end the recruitment and use of children by the armed forces.

While we welcome efforts to end recruitment by Government forces, we must not lose our focus on violations against children committed by non-State armed groups. In fact, the majority of groups listed in the Secretary-General's report as having recruited or used children — 46 groups out of 55 — are non-State actors. Many of those non-State armed groups have recruited children persistently for more than five years. It is crucial that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General continue her efforts to conclude action plans with non-State armed groups, difficult though that is to achieve. However, in order for her to do so, Governments must allow United Nations access to those groups to address child protection concerns. The Council must keep a very close eye on progress with that.

In many conflict situations around the world, schools are attacked or used for military purposes. In Syria, almost a quarter of all schools have been damaged, occupied or destroyed. It is essential that all parties implement resolution 2139 (2014) on humanitarian access in Syria, which was adopted by the Council two weeks ago and which demanded that all parties to conflict in Syria demilitarize schools. It was a unanimous and powerful demand by the entire Council.

In so many conflict situations, schools have been used as military barracks, detention facilities, interrogation centres and weapons storage facilities. Using schools for military purposes gravely endangers the lives of children and is contrary to international law. We cannot deny generations of children an education through the destruction or misuse of school premises. We must work decisively on that.

It should be axiomatic, as Alhadji has reminded us today, that those responsible for serious international crimes committed against children during conflict be held to account. Where national authorities are unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute such crimes, the International Criminal Court can play a key instrumental role. The International Criminal Court's unanimous conviction of Thomas Lubanga for the war crime of enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 years and using them to participate actively in hostilities was a landmark decision. Only by ensuring accountability can we deter future crimes.

In conclusion, we must never just accept the risk to children during armed conflict. We know they are the most vulnerable and least able to withstand its ravages. As Ambassador Gasana has just reminded us, they are often the first victims. Their protection must remain central to our efforts in the Council to protect civilians — the primordial core of the Council's work. We cannot do enough to achieve that. As Leila Zerrougui has said this morning, hundreds of thousands of children have their eyes on us.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation would like to thank the delegation of Luxembourg for its initiative to convene today's meeting and its very professional chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

We thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund Mr. Anthony Lake, and Mr. Alhadji Babah Sawaneh for their participation in this meeting and their useful contributions to today's discussion. Separately, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, Ms. Zerrougui, for her commitment to assisting children and for her active work in various regions of the world.

As one of the most vulnerable groups of the population, children continue to suffer the horrors of war, despite all the measures undertaken at the national and international levels and the existence of a broad international legal basis. The approach to considering the issue of children and armed conflict must be comprehensive, as established in resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent documents of the Security Council. This requires equal attention to be accorded to all six categories of grave violations against children in armed conflict, both within the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place and during the activities of the relevant thematic Working Group of the Security Council.

These mechanisms need above all to engage in the most pressing and widescale situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council. Unfortunately, the Security Council periodically reviews the issue of children in situations that are not only not on its agenda but also cannot be described as armed conflict. While this subject is of the utmost importance, we believe that it is incorrect in this context for the Council to focus on issues that are not related to the maintenance of international peace and security. These are the prerogatives of other entities, whose work should not be duplicated. Only by maintaining a balanced division of labour can we ensure the greater effectiveness of all bodies engaged on the issue of children and achieve synergies between them.

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, headed by Luxembourg, has done a great deal to establish, in an atmosphere of trust, accommodations on specific situations and to structure dialogues with countries affected by armed conflict. In order effectively to implement existing plans, close cooperation must be developed with the Governments of those countries, which ultimately should help to improve the situation of children on the ground. National Governments play a paramount role in protecting and rehabilitating children in armed conflict, while the actions undertaken by the bodies of the United Nations system must seek to support and complement national efforts.

Preventing crimes against children is an important component of the set of measures developed to promote post-conflict settlement and recovery. Russia condemns all violations against children, above all the most serious, whosoever perpetrates them, and advocates bringing their perpetrators to justice. Crimes against children should not go unpunished. We are particularly alarmed by the killing and wounding of children in premeditated attacks and as a result of indiscriminate or excessive use of force, including as a result of the use of unmanned aircraft. The rapid development of military technologies has seen such instances take place with tragic regularity. This issue calls for ever heightened attention.

The report of Mr. Emmerson, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, prepared for the twenty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, cites 37 cases in which unmanned aircraft have carried out attacks leading to civilian casualties. According to the data of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, in 2013 19 confirmed uses of drones led to 59 civilian casualties, 45 of which were deaths. As a result of 54 combat air operations carried out by the International Security Assistance Force, there were 182 casualties, of which 118 were killed. Women and children comprised some 45 per cent of civilian victims of such operations.

Last year's thematic report provided by Ms. Zerrougui to the Security Council (S/2013/245) cites specific information on the use of drones in Pakistan that have killed or wounded children. Information is available on reports of child victims of United States air strikes in Yemen. One such case was an attack by unmanned aerial vehicle on 2 September 2012 in the region of Rada, as a result of which there were 12 civilian deaths, including those of three children and one pregnant woman. We should also recall the civilian deaths occasioned by NATO military operations in Libya. We do not accept attempts to categorize civilian victims, above all children, as so-called collateral damage. That contravenes, inter alia, the provisions of international humanitarian law. We advocate scrupulous investigation of such incidents and the punishment of their perpetrators.

Slightly less than a year ago, in a Security Council debate on children and armed conflict, several delegations advanced the priority idea of exerting pressure on so-called persistent perpetrators. While we do not dispute the importance of approaching this issue in the framework of the appropriate context, in each case we need to understand who such perpetrators are and why a number of parties to conflict have remained so long on the lists contained in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports, despite efforts to remedy the situation. We believe that the establishment of clear procedures and criteria for the listing and delisting of parties to armed conflict in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General would enhance the transparency of existing procedures and strengthen trust in the objectivity of the functioning of the entire range of instruments. Unfortunately, that issue is not duly reflected in resolution 2143 (2014), adopted today.

We believe that the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, launched yesterday to end the recruitment and use of children in Government armed forces by 2016, is an important step in the right direction. We believe that openness with respect to that issue will not only lead to tangible results to prevent the recruitment by Government armed forces, but also set an example to be followed forthwith by many armed groups. We hope that the campaign, having demonstrated its balanced and impartial nature, will enhance the attractiveness and effectiveness of the engagement of parties to conflict with the United Nations in the prevention of violence against women.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by expressing our appreciation to you, Madam, for convening this important debate. We should like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Special Representative Leila Zerrougui, Executive Director Anthony Lake and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their participation and statements.

In recent years, the theme of children and armed conflict has been firmly placed on the international agenda. The Security Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to ensuring the protection of children in armed conflict, most notably by adopting resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005). Progress has been made in relation to dialogue with parties to conflicts and the signing of action plans on the ground.

However, children remain the most vulnerable group in many ongoing armed conflicts around the world. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/245), children in Syria are facing a dire situation in which they have been killed, injured, displaced and tortured. There are many accounts of violations against children in conflict areas, such as in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali. Much more needs to be done with a view to enhancing the protection of children affected by armed conflicts. Against that backdrop, I should like to make a few observations about where greater efforts could be made.

First, we welcome the fact that all Government armed forces listed in the Secretary-General's report have entered into an action plan process. Meanwhile, we also note that non-State armed groups constitute the vast majority of listed parties. Children in armed conflict cannot be protected completely unless all parties to conflicts abide by their obligations under international law. As such, it is imperative that all parties listed in the report develop and implement action plans.

Secondly, the protection of children should be ensured throughout the fulfilment of United Nations peacekeeping mandates. In particular, child protection advisers currently deployed in six United Nations peacekeeping missions and four political missions play crucial roles in mainstreaming child protection. Specific provisions for the protection of children should continue to be included in all relevant mandates of United Nations missions.

Thirdly, perpetrators of grave violations against children must be held accountable. Ending impunity is vital in the prevention of violations against children. In that regard, we recognize the International Criminal Court's contribution to ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes against children, as demonstrated in the *Thomas Lubanga Dyilo* case. At the same time, national legislation and judicial systems should be strengthened in order to investigate and prosecute such perpetrators.

Last but not least, it is noteworthy that several Security Council Sanctions Committees include violations against children in their sanctions designation criteria. Such a linkage between the perspective of child protection and the work of the relevant sanctions regimes can serve as a practical tool to put pressure on perpetrators.

Children represent our collective future. Saving the children affected by armed conflict is saving the very future of humankind. The Republic of Korea fully supports resolution 2143 (2014), which was adopted earlier here in the Chamber.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation thanks you, Madam President, for convening this important debate on children and armed conflict and for the concept note (S/2014/144, annex), which sheds light on the topic and serves as a useful guide for our discussions here today. We thank the Secretary-General for his statement. We also thank his Special Representative Leila Zerrougui, UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake for their briefings, as well as Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for sharing his experience with us.

We welcome the adoption by consensus of resolution 2143 (2014), of which Nigeria was a sponsor. The resolution comprehensively addresses the issue of children and armed conflict and underscores the Security Council's continued concern about the subject.

In the interests of time, my comments will focus on two aspects of the children and armed conflict agenda, that is, the role of regional organizations in implementing the agenda and the "Children, not soldiers" campaign of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF.

Nigeria acknowledges and applauds the valuable contributions of regional and subregional organizations to the children and armed conflict agenda. In that regard, we take note of the agreement signed on 17 September 2013 by the Office of the Special Representative and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Department, which aims at strengthening protection mechanisms in collaboration with UNICEF. The agreement outlines the following areas of collaboration among the three entities: first, the protection of children in all African Union peace and security activities; secondly, the deployment of child protection specialists in the Peace and Security Department; thirdly, the joint development of a programme of work including the alignment of domestic legislation with internationally recognized rights of the child; fourthly, the joint development of guidelines to protect children affected by armed conflict; and, fifthly, the development of training programmes on child protection for troop-contributing countries to AU peacekeeping missions.

In terms of the legal framework at the regional level, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which the Organization of African Unity adopted in 1990, came into force in 1999. The Charter prohibits the recruitment or direct participation in hostilities or internal strife of anyone under the age of 18. It calls upon States parties to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts that affect the child. The Charter requires that all the necessary measures be taken to ensure that no child takes direct part in hostilities and, in particular, requires States to refrain from recruiting any child. It enjoins States parties, in accordance with the obligations under international humanitarian law, to protect the civilian population in armed conflict and take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict. Forty-seven of the 54 States members of the African Union have ratified the Charter, which indicates the near universalization of the instrument on the continent.

We welcome the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF in collaboration with other United Nations partners with a view to ending and preventing by 2016 the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict. The concept note asks how best the campaign can be supported. We believe that one effective way to do so by States, civil society, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders launching a sustained drive towards the universalization of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The General Assembly adopted that instrument in May 2000, and in entered into force in February 2002. There are currently 154 States parties to the Convention and 129 signatories to the Protocol prohibitting the compulsuory recruitment into the armed forces of States parties of persons below the age of 18 as well as their direct involvement in hostilities. A total of 42 African countries have signed or ratified the Protocol. Nigeria signed it in September 2000 and ratified it in September 2012. We would like to see all States ratify this important instrument in the children and armed conflict agenda. As Special Representative Zerrougui stated in September 2013 at the annutal Treaty event, "The universal ratification of the Optional Protocol would take us one step closer to a world without child soldiers."

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's important open debate to discuss progress towards the full implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda. I also thank Foreign Minister Asselborn for his personal presence in the Council and for Luxembourg's strong and consistent leadership on this issue, including through its chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Let me also warmly thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative Leila Zerrougui and the other briefers for their statements. I was particularly struck by the testimony of Mr. Sawanah, which brought to life for all of us why this issue is so important.

Fifteen years ago, the Security Council recognized children and armed conflict as an issue of international peace and security with the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999). While we have since seen the release, reintegration and protection of thousands of children, nonetheless violations continue: in Syria, where well over 10,000 children have been killed, 3,000 schools damaged or destroyed and 3 million children are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, and in Africa, where the Lord's Resistance Army has blighted the lives of thousands of children, terrorizing and displacing them from their homes as well as recruiting them to torture and kill. As long as children's lives continue to be torn apart by conflict, our work and commitment must also continue. We therefore welcome the adoption of today's resolution 2143 (2014), which adopts practical steps for combating violations against children. The resolution draws attention to devastating attacks on schools in armed conflict. Schools are protected civilian objects under international humanitarian law, and yet the Council has heard in briefings by Valerie Amos of the continued militarization of schools in conflict, especially in Syria. Schools should be a place of safety, learning and peace, not violence and conflict.

It is high time that Member States upheld their responsibility to protect children. We warmly welcome the campaign "Children, not soldiers", aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016. The United Kingdom recognizes that this is an ambitious undertaking. Special Representative Zerrougui and UNICEF Executive Director Tony Lake have led the campaign, but that is not enough. We ask the Secretary-General to ensure that the campaign is mainstreamed throughout the United Nations work, from peace processes to peacebuilding, including in the work of country teams. We look to Mr. Ladsous and Mr. Feltman to empower child protection advisers in United Nations field missions.

When it comes to children's lives, no effort can be spared. It is also in our hands as Member States to support the implementation of the United Nations framework on children and armed conflict. The United Kingdom is doing its part. Foreign Office Minister Mark Simmonds has personally committed himself to work to release child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Chad and Burma. He has urged those Governments to implement their action plans with the United Nations to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers. He has also highlighted the need to prevent and protect children from other grave violations, including sexual violence.

The United Kingdom believes that regional organizations can also make important contributions, as we have just heard from my Nigerian colleague. That is why we are funding a child protection adviser in the African Union (AU), who will help implement the AU-Special Representative joint declaration.

All parties to armed conflict, State and non-State parties alike, must abide by international law. Those who violate international law must be prosecuted. With verified information on violations against children from United Nations country task forces and Ms. Zerrougui's commitment to concluding action plans, compliance with international law can now be measured. We call on all parties to sign action plans, and we call on those that have already signed to honour their commitments in full. We urge the Secretary-General to strengthen monitoring, reporting and response, and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to increase pressure on persistent perpetrators.

I want to highlight today the invaluable contribution of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the fight against impunity for crimes against children. Two years ago, the ICC found Thomas Lubanga guilty of the war crime of using children to participate in hostilities. Today, the ICC found Germain Katanga guilty of war crimes. Although he was acquitted of using child soldiers, the Trial Chamber found that children were used as combatants. No matter who is responsible, that is an appalling violation of those children's rights. The fight against impunity must continue. We also welcome the fact that Bosco Ntaganda will be held to account by the ICC for the alleged recruitment of child soldiers in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We have an obligation to the next generation in countries affected by conflict. It is no exaggeration to say that violations of children's rights compromise a country's future prosperity and ability to build lasting peace. We must commit to doing everything we can to prevent abhorrent violations and rise to the challenges to protecting the world's children.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me, Madam President, to thank you for your efforts in presiding over the Security Council this month. We wish you and the delegation of Luxembourg every success. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui; and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake, for their valuable briefings. Furthermore, I thank Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for his very moving statement.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the role of Luxembourg in mainstreaming the prespective of children and armed conflicts in the Council's deliberations through its chairmanship of the Working Group dedicated to this goal and by raising awareness of the six grave violations of the rights of the child, as defined by the Secretary-General and explained in in the monitoring and reporting mechanism. It is also evident in Luxembourg's leadership of the efforts of the Council and the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014) today, which is one of the most advanced Security Council resolutions in terms of protecting the rights of children and reflects the political will of the Council ms to promote action on this issue.

Despite the noticeable progress in international humanitarian law and human rights instruments in recent years, the rights of the child are still subject to continued violations in armed conflict, especially in fragile areas and environments where children live. Children are subject to recruitment, killing, kidnapping, violence torture, threats caused by arbitrary attacks on populated areas, as well as the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordinance. Attacks on schools and their use as detention camps, weapons depots, training grounds and bases for launching military operations are also grave violations that deprive children of their rights, and reduce the the possibility for ensuring their rehabilitation.

Jordan is of the view that we should adopt concrete short-term measures to guarantee the commitment of all parties concerned to human rights and international humanitarian law through eandevours aimed at activating or establishing mechanisms to ensure that instruments and conventions, especially the four Geneva Conventions and their Protocols, are implemented, integrated into national legislation, and subject to monitoring and control. Parties to armed conflicts in the most fragile areas must also be compelled to develop and implement time-bound action plans to stop grave violations against children. In this context, we believe it is important to support a strategies to promote efforts aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces, as contained in the concept paper (S/2014/144, annex), by the end of 2016. We look forward to promoting the efforts of Member States and the United Nations system in that respect.

Combating grave violations of the rights of children also requires supporting long-term programmes to reintegrate children who were previously associated with armed groups and mainstreaming child protection issues in the training programmes for peacekeepers and in the work of peacebuilding commissions. It also requires promoting the presence of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations in order to support the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and to participate in dialogue with parties to conflict. In that regard, we urge international bodies to continue closely monitoring violations and developing the instruments, guidelines, training materials and information management systems necessary to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism, as well as strengthening the capacities of relevant States by providing them with technical assistance, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the donor community.

Ensuring the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict requires us to use all available tools in order to provide a complete child protection system by activating mechanisms to guarantee that those who commit crimes against children in armed conflict will not enjoy impunity, and by emphasizing the need to implement relevant Security Council resolutions with regard to pursuing children with the aim of forcing them into military action.

In addition to reaffirming the ban against using schools for military purposes, we affirm the need for the Council to implement punitive, deterrent and effective measures against those who violate the rights of children in armed conflict and to hold them accountable.

The Council can take further measures by supporting sanctions regimes against the perpetrators of gross violations against children, based on its resolutions and strengthened cooperation among its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and Sanctions Committees.

Jordan urges the development of a mechanism to monitor the recruitment of children in armed forces, as well as concerted measures to guarantee accountability and an end to impunity for those responsible for gross violations against children. As the prosecution of perpetrators is the primary responsibility of the States concerned, there is a need to adopt the necessary legislation, thereby requiring implementation and compliance mechanisms as well as cooperation among States and the Council and the mainstreaming of international efforts to guarantee justice. In that vein, the international legal system, including the International Criminal Court, has an important role to play in promoting justice by prosecuting the perpetrators of grave violations against children.

Jordan was among the leading Middle East States to ratify the relevant international commitments on the protection of children, which we have implemented. In 2006, we ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the provisions of which were widely distributed to all relevant States.

Jordan's legislation now includes provisions specifying that individuals under 18 years of age are prohibited from involvement in military actions. Jordan has also ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, including its Optional Protocol, as evidence of our commitment to providing children with comprehensive protection.

Clearly, the Middle East suffers from a vacuum in the area of the protection of children in armed conflict and under foreign occupation. Israel's construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, its refusal to provide permits for the construction of schools and its placing of obstacles to providing educational services for the Arab population of East Jerusalem, along with its continued illegal blockade, have all led to depriving Palestinian children access to educational services. Nearly 30,000 Palestinian children have been deprived of the opportunity to take part in the official education system.

Resolution 2139 (2014) addressed the humanitarian catastrophe inside and beyond Syria, where the victims are mostly children. Implementing the resolution will alleviate the catastrophe involving children. We call upon all parties to implement the resolution, as well as for enhanced efforts by the international community in that regard.

Jordan takes this opportunity to mention specifically paragraph 15 of the resolution, which "[e]mphasizes that the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate in the absence of a political solution". That has increased the humanitarian and economic challenges confronting the States of the region, including in particular Jordan, which has received continuous flows of Syrian refugees, a large number of whom are children.

Jordan has opened its education system to Syrian refugee children, which has led to overcrowded classrooms and a 41 per cent increase in the attendance rate. It has also led 80 per cent of the Kingdom's schools to provide two sessions per day. Estimates indicate that 86,000 Syrian students have enrolled in public schools in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan throughout the various governorates, and that 21,000 Syrian students have enrolled in schools in the refugee camps since the Syrian crisis started in March 2011. As a result, the Government of Jordan is now shouldering the financial, economic and social burdens of hosting the refugees. The cost of hosting a refugee child now exceeds $3,500 annually, the large portion of which is borne by the Jordanian treasury.

In cooperation with UNICEF, Jordan has provided social and psychological support programmes to more than 111,000 Syrian students. The programmes aim to alleviate the stress of being a refugee and to rehabilitate them. In addition, Jordan hosts more than 42 per cent of the total number of Palestinian refugees worldwide — more than 2 million refugees — yet Jordan receives only approximately 20 per cent of the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

We note that, in the past 65 years, Jordan has provided direct and indirect services to refugees, despite its limited resources, including education. Estimates indicate that nearly 150,000 children are enrolled in UNICEF's schools, as compared to the more than 491,000 refugee children enrolled in public schools throughout the Kingdom. That has cost the country's treasury over $190 million annuallly, over and above the education services provided by UNRWA.

Jordan will continue its cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. My country commends the role of the United Nations and its efforts to alleviate the suffering of the refugee children in the Kingdom. However, the international community must assume its responsibility with regard to children and continue to play a leading role in protecting their rights.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Luxembourg, Minister Asselbourn and you, Madam, for convening this open debate and for your country's leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

My country welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2143 (2014), proposed by Luxembourg and sponsored by Chile at a critical time, as highlighted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We value and welcome the statements delivered by the Secretary-General; his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui; the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake' and especially by Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, whose testimony has urged the Council to take decisive action on the issue before it.

My delegation endorses the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Greece on behalf of the Human Security Network, of which my country is a member.

On the international scene today, the vulnerability of children in situations of armed conflict contributes an element of urgency, dedication and strong commitment to global efforts to protect children — efforts that should certainly not be selective. The situations in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, among others, remind us of our responsibilities. In that regard, Chile would like to emphasize the challenge implicit in the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Our reflections here will be based on some issues raised in the President's concept note (S/2014/144, annex). As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, to Convention No.182 of the International Labour Organization and to the Paris Principles on children associated with armed forces or groups, Chile welcomes the campaign "Children, not soldiers", launched yesterday by the Special Representative and UNICEF and aimed at preventing and eradicating the recruitment and use of children by armed Government forces by 2016. We would like to stress how important it is that the campaign not divert attention from action designed to eradicate this practice by armed groups. We believe the campaign could benefit from forming coalitions and holding regional meetings, as was done in the framework of the conferences on the use of children as soldiers held in Maputo and Montevideo in 1999.

States bear the primary responsibility both for ending impunity and for trying and punishing those responsible for atrocities committed against children. In cases where States are unable or unwilling to bring the suspects to justice, responsibility lies with the International Criminal Court to prosecute crimes covered under the Rome Statute. International commissions of inquiry must tackle this issue and redouble efforts to preserve the evidence of such highly serious crimes.

The registration of births, including delayed registration, not only makes it possible to verify the age of child recruits and ensure that they are demobilized, it also constitutes evidence that can be used to punish those responsible for their recruitment, thus helping to end impunity. We welcome the fact that today's resolution 2143 (2014) covers this issue. The Council should consider taking more forceful action against those who commit serious and persistent violations against children and imposing sanctions on persistent perpetrators. We would welcome recommendations on the subject from the groups of experts on the Sanctions Committees and hope that resolutions on new committees and mandate renewals will take due account of the situation of children in armed conflict.

In connection with the implementation of resolution 1998 (2011), of which Chile was a sponsor, we emphasize the importance of respecting the civilian nature of schools and condemn attacks and threats of attacks contravening international humanitarian law on schools and hospitals and on those protected through their connection to them. We are also concerned about closings of schools and hospitals in situations of armed conflict, undermining the right to education. We urge parties to armed conflicts to refrain from such actions and hope that the Secretary-General will continue to monitor and report on military uses of schools and hospitals. We are in favour of drafting and implementing guidelines to reduce the use of schools and universities by parties to armed conflicts in support of their military actions and thus minimize the adverse effect of armed conflicts on the safety of students and education. In that connection, we note with interest guidelines formulated by civil society that could be a basis for Government action in this area. We believe that this issue should be covered in ceasefire agreements and in post-conflict agendas.

It is essential that mandates for peacekeeping operations and important United Nations political missions make specific provisions for the protection of children, the ongoing deployment of child protection advisers and training in the area for contingents and staff, and ensure that we be kept informed on these issues in the Council's consultations on those mandates. In that context, we appreciate the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations regarding the matter. Based on my country's experience in peacekeeping missions, we have incorporated into the police sections of such missions policewomen from Chile's Carabineros and Policía de Investigaciones, whose experience in the area can contribute concretely to implementing mandates as they relate to the protection of children.

We stress that more decisive and systemic efforts are needed to end impunity and find a lasting solution to the issue of eradicating and preventing illegal violations of children's rights. Two years before the twentieth anniversary of Graça Machel's report on children and armed conflict (A/51/306), Chile reiterates its commitment to making an active contribution to preventing and eliminating all forms of violence that affect the children of the world, from armed conflicts to urban violence.

I will conclude with the watchwords of Chile's Nobel Prize laureate Gabriela Mistral: the future of children is always today. Tomorrow will be too late.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Luxembourg for organizing this meeting on children and armed conflict and to congratulate it on its leadership and continued commitment to protecting children. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their briefings. I also welcome the presence and testimony of Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, a former child soldier in Sierra Leone.

Children are often the most vulnerable and most exposed victims in armed conflicts. They remain scarred for life by the atrocities and consequences of war.

That is why protecting them in war time remains and will remain an ongoing concern of the international community. Despite the adoption of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as such regional legal instruments as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, we are far from being able to protect children during armed conflicts. The atrocities to which children are subject in Syria and the Central African Republic unfortunately corroborate that sad reality.

In the Central African Republic, children are increasingly targeted because of their community or religious affiliations. The violence perpetrated against them is unprecedented. Some are killed and disemboweled, or even have limbs amputed. Such barbarous acts in the Central African Republic and elsewhere are grave human rights violations. Investigations should be launched and prosecutions undertaken so that the perpetrators of those terrible crimes are punished.

The frequency, intensity and new warfare strategies emerging today test the framework for prevention and the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. In various areas, children are the targets of indiscriminate bombing, sometimes in schools. They are recruited into armed forces willingly or by force. Given the many unacceptable situations, the international community unfortunately remains powerless or reacts too late to prevent a disaster. At any rate, the international community needs to step up its efforts and commitment to ensuring implementation by States of the engagements undertaken in the context of protecting children in armed conflict. Similarly, we need to strengthen the monitoring tools and mechanisms in areas of armed conflict to better prevent violations of the rights of children.

In my country Chad, as is known, owing to a long civil war and the many outside aggressions that it has suffered, children have been recruited and used for years in the ranks of numerous groups and armed forces. However, with the restoration of stability and the strong political will of the highest authorities, Chad has resolutely undertaken to establish a professional army by putting an end to the recruitment of children in its ranks and by demobilizing all those who were there. Achieving that object was a major challenge to meet, but thanks to to the tireless political will of His Excellency the President of the Republic, the wise advice of Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, to whom I would like to pay tribute, and the consistent assistance of UNICEF, Chad succeeded in that goal, to the satisfaction of all.

As I said yesterday at the launching of the joint "Children, not soldiers" campaign, Chad has fully implemented the plan of action agreed with the United Nations and now no longer has children in its armed forces. That has been confirmed by independent external verification in the eight military regions, 11 areas of the national gendarmerie and six national guard groupings. Chad reaffirms its commitment to working with the United Nations office and UNICEF to further strengthen cooperation at the regional and subregional levels with a view to promoting the protection of children, as we have undertaken in the framework of the so-called N'Djamena Declaration, adopted and signed on 9 June 2010 by the representatives of Chad, the Central African Republic, the Sudan, Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. We are aware that our gains need to be consolidated daily in order to be sustainable and to avoid a backsliding, but the progress and results obtained are tangible and should be taken into account in appraising the situation.

At the international level, we believe that the international community needs to mobilize in order to support the agenda of the United Nations system with a view to putting an end to the recruitment and use of children by 2016. In that regard, it would be desirable to take action at the national and the regional levels in order, inter alia, to evaluate international legislation on the rights of the child so as to ensure harmony and consolidate prevention and protection measures; expand the number of parties to the instruments on the rights of the child through well-targeted programmes and robust incentive measures with respect to certain States; support the efforts of affected States in order to develop or adapt their legislation to better deal with violations of the rights of the child; and, lastly, promote cooperation on prevention and the protection of children in armed conflict at the regional and subregional levels through seminars and workshops.

Lastly, I would like once again to thank the United Nations system, in particular Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and UNICEF, whose support has been very useful to Chad in the implementation of the commitments undertaken within the framework of its plan of action. Chad will remain open to their advice and suggestions with regard to what remains to be done.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Vonta (Slovenia): I would like to thank the Luxembourg presidency for convening this important open debate. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Ms. Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Sawaneh for their comprehensive briefings.

Let me align our statement with the statements to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and the representative of the Human Security Network.

My country welcomes the recent developments in the Security Council discussions on children and armed conflict, such as the focus on sexual violence, in particular on justice and accountability, the increased attention to the issues of child protection when setting up or renewing United Nations mission mandates and the attention of children in fast-changing situations on the Security Council agenda. We also welcome the regular briefings by Special Representative Zerrougui to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as other activities for the greater accountability. We would encourage all actors to continue with those efforts and to enhance the efficiency of the tools at their disposal.

We are deeply concerned that, although much has been done since 1996, when the Machel report on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306) shocked the international community, children still suffer in situations of armed conflict, such as in Syria and the Central African Republic, as well as in too many other places.

Slovenia remains concerned over the fact that more than half of the parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict are persistent perpetrators. The Security Council needs to address that issue urgently by imposing targeted measures and by considering ways to increase pressure on such persistent perpetrators in the Working Group.

We also believe that there is an urgent need to identify ways to approach non-State armed groups and to conclude action plans with them, since the vast majority of the parties listed in the annexes to the annual report are armed groups. An important role is played by the authorities in the countries concerned that should allow unconditional access of the United Nations to those armed groups.

As a strong believer in the power of education, Slovenia remains greatly concerned over the increasing reports of attacks on schools and about the military use of schools. Attacks on schools and the military use of schools put children and teachers at risk while denying children their right to education. We welcome the drafting of the Lucens guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict and support their finalization, which should be followed by broad endorsement by States.

My country also strongly believes in the importance of accountability and the fight against impunity. The primary responsibility for the prosecution of conflict-related crimes, including violations committed against children, lies with States. Greater effort is therefore needed to improve criminal justice at national levels. Among other actions, we need to strengthen the international legal framework for judicial assistance, including extradition, between States in order to support effective prosecution of international crimes at a national level. Having recognized that legal gap, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Belgium and Argentina are working together on the initiative to consider the possibility of adopting a new international instrument on mutual legal assistance and extradition for the effective investigation and prosecution of the most serious crimes of international concern by domestic jurisdictions. We intend to continue with activities in that respect in the framework of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and we invite other States to join the initiative.

The international community has been working on the issue of child soldiers for a long time, yet children are still recruited and used by parties to conflict. In that regard, my country welcomes the campaign "Children, not soldiers", launched yesterday not far from here.

Its goal, to prevent and eliminate child recruitment by national security forces by 2016, should not be missed.

Let me conclude by stressing the need for preventive measures in order to achieve our common goal. We recognize birth registration as one of the most important measures. In December 2013, a professional training programme was carried out on a system of civil status and migration for Afghanistan, co-financed by Slovenia. That programme included training on civil registration. The main goal of that development assistance programme was to present and share Slovenia's experience in that field.

Finally, I welcome the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014), on children and armed conflict, and its aim to reinforce the implementation of the normative framework that has been gradually developed in the Security Council since the adoption of the first resolution on this topic 15 years ago.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its States members. The candidate countries Montenegro and Serbia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

First, let me thank today's briefers for their presentations. In particular, I wish to recognize the tireless work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui in the interests of children affected by armed conflict. Her mandate is as relevant today as ever, given disturbing reports of grave violations against children committed in many ongoing conflicts, such as in Syria, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. I would also like to thank specifically Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for the very moving and important statement that he made here today.

The European Union fully supports the campaign "Children, not soldiers", which the Special Representative initiated yesterday with UNICEF and in collaboration with other United Nations partners with a view to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016. We are extremely grateful for the strong emphasis that the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has placed on all of these issues, including through its initiative to hold today's meeting.

I would also say that it is particularly important that the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict continue to make good use of the various instruments in its toolbox to respond to all types of grave violations, whenever they occur, including those committed by non-State groups. It is essential that Member States afford the United Nations unconditional access to armed non-State actors and that the issue of children and armed conflict be addressed in peace negotiations.

We concur with the worrying assessment of the Secretary-General in his reports on the increasing use of schools for military purposes, which may render them more vulnerable to attacks and put more children out of school or in risk of injury, abduction or other violations. We therefore strongly welcome the efforts of Luxembourg as the chair of the Working Group to agree at the Council level on concrete measures that could prevent such misuse and ensure accountability.

We urge all parties to conflicts to stop attacks on schools and hospitals and on protected staff, and to respect their civilian character. In the meantime, as a mitigating measure, the European Union will continue to pay attention to the education and wellbeing of children affected by conflict. As Council members will recall, the EU's Nobel Prize money has been used for the Children of Peace initiative. Through that programme from 2012 to 2014, the EU has reached out to approximately 108,000 children in countries such as Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan and Colombia. Protecting and promoting child rights everywhere, especially in conflict-affected countries, is an earmarked priority of the European Union's human rights funding instruments.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) continues to play a crucial role in fighting impunity. Serious crimes of international concern should be dealt with by national judicial systems but, when they are unwilling or unable to do so, States parties to the Rome Statute should consider referring those situations to the ICC. It is also important that the Security Council use its power to refer situations to the ICC. Further institutional dialogue between the Court and the Security Council and the effective follow up of referrals made by the Security Council to the ICC could assist in ensuring accountability.

All States members of the European Union are parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and adhere to the same international child-protection standards. That is also an important milestone in the light of the European Union's role in crisis management and peacebuilding, with approximately 7,000 civilian and military staff deployed in various conflict zones.

Equally important is the need to train peacekeepers on child protection issues and to ensure the inclusion of child protection provisions in the mandates of crisis-management operations, in standard operating procedures and in rules of engagement.

The European Union has made serious efforts over recent months to strengthen its capacity in child protection in headquarters and in operations. In June 2013, in cooperation with UNICEF and several non-governmental organizations, the European Union organized the first regular training for its staff on children and armed conflict. The course will be given on annual basis. In October 2013, with the help of Belgium and Save the Children, the European Union tested its predeployment child protection training module for civilian and military personnel.

As of February 2014, a toolkit aimed at integrating child rights in development cooperation had been finalized for use, not only by European Union staff but also by all other donors and civil society organizations. The toolkit was developed in cooperation with UNICEF.

In 2013, the European Union was careful to mainstream the promotion of human rights, child protection and international humanitarian law in the mandate of the EU Training Mission in Mali. This year, we incorporated child protection in the ongoing planning for the European Union operation in the Central African Republic.

We believe that regional and subregional organizations have an important role to play in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, including during armed conflict. There are a number of initiatives we have organized together with the African Union, the World Bank and the United Nations — for instance, a workshop on children in armed conflict, held in Addis Ababa in September 2013. At the Europe-Africa summit next month, our heads of States and Government will make commitments towards further cooperation, including on the protection of civilians. We hope to develop partnerships with other organizations as well.

Let me conclude by expressing the hope that the Security Council will remain a forum that is guided in its decisions on peace and security by the best interests of children. Children deserve this.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Bishnoi (India): We thank you, Mr. President, for providing this opportunity to Member States to share their views on this important subject. We also thank your delegation for the very useful concept note (S/2014/144, annex).

In one of the many religions that we have in India, God himself is depicted as a child. The child is indeed divine. Notwithstanding that divinity, child soldiers have been used in wars since time immemorial. In contemporary times, it was drummer boys who led Napoleon's initial attack in the battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815, only to be shredded to pieces by gunfire from the other side. Large numbers of women and children were also wilfully killed in concentration camps and by indiscriminate air raids in the Second World War.

We have heard from Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh of Sierra Leone today. There was a battle associated with the United Nations peacekeeping force in that country. On 10 September 2000, the British special forces launched Operation Barras to rescue British soldiers who had been captured by the West Side Boys. While the operation was successful, it led to casualties.

Looking at the theatre in the Democratic Republic of the Congo today, we find an extensive use of child soldiers by various armed groups. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has itself noted with concern allegations that 30 to 40 per cent of the Nduma Defence of Congo elements may be below 18 years of age. Despite this evidence, the Security Council has authorized the creation of an Intervention Brigade to carry out targeted offensive operations. The rules of engagement are, however, silent on engagement with child soldiers. The traumatizing nature of such engagement will also have to be considered.

We share the view contained in the concept note that those who exploit children should be held accountable. We also agree that the most effective way of doing so is through capacity-building for Member States. Action for that should originate from the issue's consideration by the General Assembly and Peacebuilding Commission. National efforts on the ground should be supported by political missions. Civilian protection advisers embedded in peacekeeping missions would themselves only be able to perform a limited role.

The political will to address the problem needs to go beyond the theatre of war. We need to address the economic and social marginalization of the poorest nations, which is driving hundreds of millions into the kind of childhood that could well make them part of tomorrow's problem rather than tomorrow's solutions. It is that understanding that explains the importance that our delegation attaches to an ambitious post-2015 development agenda that has built-in means of implementation and the required enabling environment for its achievement.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, the members of the Security Council, Ms. Zerrougui, and in particular Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, who today put a face and a smile on the story of so many others in places, such as Colombia, where so many children have experienced these difficulties.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I believe it is especially significant that the first time that I am participating in a Security Council debate, we are dealing with the very delicate subject of children in armed conflict. That is why I should like to express my gratitude, on Colombia's behalf, for this invitation to participate in this open debate. For a country such as my own that has faced tremendous challenges as a result of armed conflict, this is a valuable opportunity to share experiences and lessons learned on an issue that we unfortunately know all too well.

Security Council resolutions on this subject not only enjoy the firm support of my Government, but also carry institutional weight, since, as established in resolution 1612 (2005) and resolution 2143 (2014), adopted today, the primary role of States in protecting and assisting girls and boys in armed conflict and developing the necessary corrective measures is recognized. Colombia agrees with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Zerrougui, that in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established under resolution 1612 (2005), any dialogue between special representatives, the United Nations team in our country or the task force of the monitoring and reporting mechanism will be possible only with the prior express agreement of the Government of Colombia, and we were thus able to work jointly.

After the visit by Mrs. Graça Machel to Colombia in 1996, almost 20 years ago, to share her report on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306), we adopted a law prohibiting and punishing the recruitment of children under 18 years of age by the armed forces. Our commitment is also evidenced in the voluntary acceptance of the mechanism, the ongoing dialogue at the political and technical levels between the national Government and the United Nations system, and the establishment and implementation of comprehensive policies to protect children from recruitment.

Allow me to share with the Council that the fundamental strategy of the Colombian State includes a policy to prevent the recruitment and use of girls, boys and adolescents by illegal organized armed groups and criminal groups. Since 2010, we have been able to dedicate a significant amount — $190 million to date — to implementing that initiative. Colombia has established an intersectoral committee that, since 2007, has been working to reduce the recruitment of youth by illegal armed groups. The committee brings together 23 national, regional and local entities that address the prevention of sexual violence against girls and boys. That strategy has produced encouraging results. We have not achieved everything we wanted to, and we are not able to declare a complete victory, but at least 3,400 children have been dissociated from illegal groups. Some 1,160 investigations have been opened since 2003 by the country's general prosecutor concerning the rights of forcibly recruited children and the childhood of which armed groups deprived them.

Colombia believes that the United Nations role in the issue of children in armed conflict deserves our attention due to the gravity and importance of the issue. The focus should be on cooperation, prevention and the development of national capacities to prevent, combat and respond to this kind of problem, which confers on us the moral obligation to provide a brighter future for any society that calls for it.

In 2013, the National Centre for Historical Memory, which was established by the Government of Colombia as part of the peace process and through the law for victims and the restoration of land, published a heartrending report entitled "Enough already: a memoir of war and dignity", which recounts the very valiant way in which women in particular demanded that illegal groups return their children, who had been tricked into being recruited or had simply been recruited against their will. I therefore want to emphasize, as our Ambassador indicated to the Council last year (see S/PV.6980), we believe that the implementation of the mechanism set out in resolution 1612 (2005) should also be sharply focused on strengthening the existing international pressure brought to bear on illegal armed groups to put an end to their violent actions and the recruitment of minors. Similarly, we also believe that we should always bear in mind that in dealing with this issue, the Council should consider the situations and focus on those where there are armed groups that indeed threaten international peace and security, and establish distinctions with those situations that are not on its agenda. Every case must be analysed on an individual basis and the appropriate response to the circumstances, as well the specific context, of each situation should be found.

The Government of Colombia is working with the full conviction that the rebuilding of society in post-conflict situations, if we are to achieve the peace that we so deeply desire as Colombians, should be established on the basis of protection for boys and girls. As underscored by President Santos Calderón himself, Colombia seeks genuine peace — peace that will ensure non-repetition, contribute to an environment of reconciliation and heal the wounds of confrontation, and give my country its first generation in a long time of children who grow up in an environment of peace, security and prosperity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): At the outset, I would like to thank Luxembourg for holding this debate and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as the other briefers, for providing the Security Council with timely information and analysis on the impact of armed conflicts on children around the world. We especially commend Mr. Sawaneh for his inspiring words and the courage to share his experiences with us here today.

Liechtenstein strongly condemns the widespread intentional attacks on children and teachers at schools. We also deplore the military use of schools, which gravely endangers civilians and deprives children of their education. Those are clear violations of international humanitarian law, and we urge States to take all the necessary steps to end those practices and to protect children's right to education. In that context, we particularly welcome the draft Lucens guidelines and we hope for their widespread endorsement.

Liechtenstein reiterates its firm support for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and welcomes the "Children, not soldiers" campaign. We are happy to see the willingness of Governments to sign national action plans and end the recruitment and use of child soldiers. But most of the parties listed in the annex to the Secretary General's report (S/2113/245) are non-State actors. Of the 11 persistent perpetrators, 10 are non-State actors. We therefore fully support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's efforts to engage with all the relevant parties to conclude action plans and promote their implementation. The early conclusion of such action plans is also in the interest of the States concerned. They should therefore allow unconditional access for and facilitate the United Nations important work in that regard.

Liechtenstein was shocked by the findings of the Secretary-General's recent report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2014/31), which listed a number of horrendous violations and abuses against children. We are deeply concerned about those ongoing violations and abuses by both parties to the conflict and ask them to immediately put an end to them. The recent adoption of resolution 2139 (2014) is of particular importance for the situation of children, who suffer disproportionately from the armed conflict in Syria. We were relieved to see the Council take meaningful, albeit long overdue, action on the humanitarian situation in Syria. We hope that the Council will continue acting with resolve and impose appropriate sanctions should the parties fail to comply with the resolution. In addition, the Council should finally live up to its responsibility to ensure that those committing atrocity crimes in Syria, in particular crimes against children, are brought to justice. In the current circumstances, only a referral to the International Criminal Court could jump-start accountability efforts in Syria.

Let me conclude by drawing the Council's attention to the outcome of a workshop on strengthening the children and armed conflict agenda, which we convened together with our non-governmental organization partner Watchlist and the Liechtenstein Institute on

Self-Determination in December last year. The report was recently published as an official document and it contains a number of useful recommendations that we recommend for all stakeholders in the field of children and armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the presidency of Luxembourg for convening this open debate on a topic so close to Luxembourg's work in the Council. The personal presence of Deputy Prime Minister Asselborn only underscores that. In that vein, we also express our special appreciation to Luxembourg for its chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as for the concept note (S/2014/144, annex) prepared for this debate. We also thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui and Mr. Anthony Lake for their respective briefings on the item under discussion. We also express our appreciation to Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for sharing his painful experience with us and for encouraging us to continue working to find a better life for all children.

Guatemala continues to give the highest priority to addressing the situation of children caught up in armed conflict, as well as to strengthening the provisions for the protection of boys and girls in all the relevant mandates of the United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, including the deployment of child protection advisers.

Since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), in 1999, the links that have developed among Governments, the United Nations, the international community as a whole and civil society have been invaluable for the effective release of child soldiers, as well as for gathering evidence on serious violations against children set out in resolution 1612 (2005) and required by the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

We believe that the field visits of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict are very illustrative. Our delegation had the privilege of participating in the visit to Myanmar in December 2013, which allowed us to consider the Government's political will to end the recruitment of children into the armed forces as a first step that must be reinforced subsequently through the implementation of mechanisms to verify age at recruitment centres, which requires having a universal registry of birth certificates, especially in remote rural areas.

We therefore believe it is necessary to strengthen national capacities and support the reforms of the justice and security sectors, as well as the creation of specialized tribunals and mixed courts to combat mpunity for those who commit serious violations against children's rights, especially persistent perpetrators, who should not be given any amnesty or hold office in their respective Governments or armed forces.

We attach importance to the complementarity of international justice to national mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, in bringing to justice those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, especially as committed against children. In addition, our policies must evolve in accordance with changing circumstances. It is alarming that schools continue to be used for military purposes, such as for barracks or weapons caches or as command, detention and interrogation centres.

That is why we enthusiastically support the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, launched yesterday by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, in collaboration with other agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, which seeks to end by 2016 the recruitment and use of children as soldiers for armed forces on the part of those Government security forces listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual reports.

In conclusion, we welcome the adoption this morning of resolution 2143 (2014), which addresses the concerns we have expressed earlier, carrying the votes that enable us to advance in the protection of children so that they will not be the most vulnerable group in armed conflicts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Grunditz (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden.

We thank the Luxembourg presidency for holding this important debate and welcome the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014) today. We also reaffirm our strong support to Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, and to the important work of her office; to UNICEF; and to other United Nations actors in the field. We would like to express our gratitude to today's briefers for their contributions — not the least to Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for his moving personal testimony and advice. We further acknowledge and support the crucial role of civil society in advancing the children and armed conflict agenda.

The implementation of action plans by Governments and the United Nations is imperative in order to advance the agenda. We therefore fully endorse the Special Representative's "Children, not soldiers" campaign, launched yesterday, to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces by 2016. We further call for enhanced engagement with non-State armed groups for the purposes of ending violations. We call on them to conclude action plans and urge relevant Member States to allow unconditional access of the United Nations to those groups.

The next true test of the Council's work in halting violations against conflict-affected children will be how the Council acts with regard to the category of parties listed by the Secretary-General as persistent perpetrators. Those parties to conflict, who have chronically violated children's rights and have been listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports for more than five years, make up more than half of the parties.

Six parties have already signed action plans with concrete time-bound steps to prevent the recruitment and use of children in Government forces. It is important that the Council help ensure that the plans are translated into measurable action and that the United Nations continue to provide resources, advice and technical assistance to the Governments concerned. We call on all other concerned parties to sign such action plans.

The Nordic countries are deeply concerned about the ongoing violations against children in Syria. We urge all Member States to act to protect schools, teachers and students from attacks and to hold perpetrators accountable. We condemn attacks on schools and the military use of schools, and urge Member States to take steps both within their own legislation, military policies and doctrine, as well as internationally, to end such use of school facilities and to protect children's right to education. We welcome the drafting of the Lucens guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict, and we are committed to supporting its finalization and endorsement by States.

Conflicts often have a regional impact. Many regional organizations therefore have a role to play in conflict prevention, mediation and peacekeeping. We support the Special Representative's focus on engaging and strengthening partnerships with regional organizations for the sake of mainstreaming child protection. The partnership of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and UNICEF with the Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission is a good example of how to deal with the issue. We urge regional organizations to share experiences, cooperate and learn from each other.

This year, Sweden intends to host a training of trainers child-protection course. It will be organized with the support of the Secretariat, in partnership with the Swedish Armed Forces International Centre, which has extensive experience and expertise in delivering similar training programmes.

Ensuring access to health care and education for children in armed conflict may often be a very challenging task, but it is of great importance. Education is a powerful instrument for preventing young people from involvement with non-State armed groups, and an educated population is an important resource for post-conflict reconstruction, economic development and the building of a just and equal society. Special attention should be given to children, who are typically discriminated against or are at particularly high risk of being subject to violence, especially girls and children with disabilities.

We must fight against impunity for perpetrators of grave violations against children in armed conflict, including sexual violence, and underscore the importance of national and international accountability mechanisms, in particular the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Security Council should, for example, urgently address the situation in Syria in all its aspects, including on a possible referral to the ICC. We welcome the Special Representative's request for progress in prosecuting crimes of sexual violence at both the national and the international levels.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium wishes to associate itself with the statement made earlier today by the observer of the European Union and congratulates Luxembourg for its commitment to the issue under discussion.

The past few years have been marked by significant progress in the field of protection of the rights of the child in armed conflict, more specifically in the prevention of and response to violence and abuses committed against them. In that context, we refer in particular to the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of thousands of children recruited into armed forces and the signing of national action plans between parties to armed conflict and the United Nations.

Despite such progress, however, huge challenges remain. We stress first of all that although positive achievements have been made in the fight against the recruitment of children into armed forces, it is limited at this stage to governmental forces. It is therefore necessary to pursue dialogue to achieve our goal of eliminating the use of child soldiers by non-governmental armed forces and groups.

Belgium welcomes the attention accorded in resolution 2143 (2014) — which the Security Council has just adopted today and which Belgium co-sponsored — to the problem of military use of schools by governmental and non-governmental armed groups, and to attacks on schools and hospitals. Indeed, the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2014/31) notes an increase in attacks on schools and hospitals, which should be areas of peace and refuge. The report notes, however, that they are increasingly attacked or used for military purposes.

Resolution 1998 (2011) highlights the impact of such attacks on the security, education and health of children in armed conflict, and calls for increased attention to the issue. Belgium and Luxembourg have therefore undertaken the initiative of organizing an event on the margins of the current Human Rights Council session to raise awareness of that urgent problem and shed light on the challenges and opportunities involved in implementing the resolution.

Belgium has similar concerns about the reintegration of children who were involved in armed conflict, not only as child soldiers but as sexual slaves, scouts, messengers or in any daily life task. The psychological impact of recruitment into armed forces and the significant stigmatization of the children make their return to civilian life especially difficult. Without appropriate, targeted and long-term follow up — as the Council heard in today's testimony — they risk becoming, in turn, perpetrators of violence as a result of limited life experiences focused on the use of weapons. That is why we need to provide them with special assistance and include their opinions and experiences in peace processes.

Moreover, various awareness-raising actions are necessary on the issue of children in armed conflict. On the one hand, there is a need to raise awareness among families and communities to prevent stigmatization of the children; on the other hand, security forces themselves must be informed of the negative consequences, both for children involved as well as for the security forces themselves.

Awareness-raising is also necessary in tackling the issue of sexual violence, especially in cases involving children. In the Sudan and in Syria, for example, children who have suffered sexual abuse tend to remain silent, rather than to complain, because they fear social exclusion and reprisals. It is therefore of the utmost importance to implement specific provisions in order to guarantee access to justice and appropriate assistance as part of children's reintegration process.

In addition, while reporting such crimes is an important first step for the victims, their voices need to be heard and the perpetrators need to face justice.

Belgium remains highly concerned by the impunity surrounding the perpetrators of violence. In that respect, we welcome in particular the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to implement a national plan aimed at preventing and eliminating the recruitment of children in the national armed forces and preventing sexual violence. However, Belgium notes with concern the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of sexual violence. We encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo to undertake all possible measures to bring to justice those responsible for such crimes.

Under the framework of the fight against sexual violence, my country again calls for the application of the broadest possible definition of sexual violence, as determined by the International Criminal Court.

Finally, Belgium calls upon all of the countries that have not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict to do so as quickly as possible.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): Thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. Let me also take the opportunity to commend your country's chairmanship of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

I join the other speakers in welcoming the launch of the campaign "Children, not soldiers" by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui. I wish also to thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake for their commitment to defending and promoting the rights of children who are victims of armed conflicts.

Italy endorses the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

As a constant advocate of greater Security Council action to address the scourge of children in armed conflicts, Italy welcomes the progress made in recent years to strengthen the protection framework. The resolution presented by Luxembourg and adopted today (resolution 2143 (2014)), which Italy has sponsored, confirms that trend. Yet there is still much to be done. We therefore call on Security Council members to remain committed to advancing this critical agenda.

Italy concurs with the assessments of the Secretary-General contained in his report (A/68/267), regarding increasing deliberate attacks on schools, teachers and students. We are also concerned about the widespread use of schools for military purposes, including as torture sites. By rendering schools legitimate targets of attack, children and teachers are put at risk and students' right to an education is denied.

In too many parts of the world, violations against children are carried out in a climate of impunity. Impunity undermines the credibility of the protection system created by the Security Council. The Council must step up its political engagement in that field. Cooperation with national and international courts is crucial. In that regard, Italy recalls that, in cases of serious crimes of international concern, State parties to the Rome Statute should consider referring such cases to the International Criminal Court when national judicial systems are unwilling or unable to deal with such situations.

The engagement of the entire United Nations system is critical to ensuring the implementation of the architecture developed since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). That is why we commend the work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, to develop a comprehensive and systematic training programme on child protection and child rights for all peacekeeping personnel — an initiative Italy has supported since its inception.

I conclude by repeating the call for firm and united action by the international community and by the Security Council. We have a solid protection framework to implement. Any boy or girl whom we save from the scourge of war represents hope for a better future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Bamrungphong (Thailand): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Luxembourg for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March as well as to thank you, Sir, for convening this important debate and for the informative concept note (S/2014/144, annex).

My delegation would like to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their important statements and valuable perspectives.

As a member of the Human Security Network, Thailand aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the delegation of Greece on behalf of the Network.

Children should joyfully play on playgrounds, not fearfully take cover on battlefields. Thailand therefore commends and fully supports the "Children, not soldiers" campaign initiated by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict together with UNICEF.

As a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which prohibits the recruitment or use of children as soldiers, Thailand has clear rules and regulations to ensure that children under 18 years of age are not conscripted, recruited or involved in combat. The Royal Thai Government is also in the process of amending its child protection act to explicitly criminalize the involvement of children in armed forces or armed groups.

Let me turn to the issue of mainstreaming child protection into the relevant United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions. In armed conflict situations, peacekeepers are often at the forefront in protecting children. We underscore the importance of having clear mandates and guidelines in order for them to operate effectively. Peacekeepers and peacebuilders also need specific predeployment and in-mission training on issues concerning children affected by armed conflict.

We also envisage a growing role for female peacekeepers in child protection and rehabilitation during and after armed conflicts. Thailand has intensified its national efforts to increase its numbers of female peacekeepers. They will be specifically trained in international law and international humanitarian law on the rights and protection of women and children. It is our earnest hope that Thai female peacekeepers will be able to make an ongoing contribution, particularly in cases involving violence against women and children, who need special care and treatment.

Next Monday, 10 March, Thailand will organize a side event on increasing women's contribution to peace and security at the Japan Society here in New York. Participants from Australia, Rwanda and Indonesia will share their views and perspectives on the role of female peacekeepers. In addition, two Thai female peacekeepers will share their experiences from peacekeeping missions in Haiti and Darfur.

In her concept note (S/2014/144, annex), the President raises the question of how to make effective progress on the issue of children and armed conflict. In that regard, Thailand would like to reiterate the views on the subject that it outlined in this Chamber last year.

First, the issue of child protection is multidimensional. Different United Nations agencies have different mandates. Synergies for protecting children can be created by strengthening collaboration and coordination within the United Nations system. To avoid duplication of effort and make the best use of limited resources, each entity's mandate should be strictly adhered to and carried out in a transparent and accountable manner.

Secondly, we have repeatedly stressed the importance of the information that forms the basis of relevant reports and analysis. Thailand recognizes the importance of gathering information from all sources and stakeholders, including civil society. However, such information must be accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable, as stipulated in paragraph 17 of the Security Council's landmark resolution 1998 (2011). Assessments based on false or incorrect information or, even worse, biased analysis, can misdirect future policy and programmes and would be counterproductive.

Thirdly, my delegation has always highlighted the critical importance of working with the consent of concerned Governments and in close cooperation with them. All actions taken by the United Nations should aim to support national efforts and increase the capacities of concerned Governments, not complicate their work or create unintended negative consequences on the ground that could ultimately place children at greater risk.

My delegation notes that resolution 2143 (2014), just adopted, invites the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to brief the Council on the issue of delisting. We welcome such actions. Clear criteria for delisting will enable the countries and parties concerned to understand and take appropriate measures to meet the requirements for delisting. It will allow work to be focused on areas of real armed conflict and those where action is needed to ensure that children are protected. It will also ensure the most efficient use of limited budgets, time and manpower. All mandate holders and desk staff, as well as members of the Secretariat and Member States, will instead be able to devote their time, energy and efforts to situations where they are really needed and where they can make a difference, especially on the ground. We hope earnestly that the Council will take our views into consideration.

In closing, my delegation condemns all grave violations and crimes against children in situations of armed conflict. Let me reiterate Thailand's support for and commitment to the effective implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions on this issue and to all mandate holders working for children's best interests.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on an important subject. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and the various briefers for their statements earlier today.

I also welcome and support the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014).

Today I would like to touch on four issues. The first is that of child soldiers; the second is on persistent perpetrators. For the third, I would like to discuss peacekeepers' responsibility to protect children. The last is that of military use of and attacks on schools.

First, I would like to address the issue of child soldiers and welcome the "Children, not soldiers" campaign launched yesterday. I commend the initiative taken by Special Representative Zerrougui and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Lake, in starting this campaign. We support it and will join in its efforts to eliminate the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016. Looking back, we can see that the issue of child soldiers is exactly what made the Security Council put the subject of children and armed conflict on its agenda. Child soldiers are deprived of their right to education. Their reintegration into society is difficult. That is a heavy loss for society as a whole.

Japan has provided support for reintegrating child soldiers into society in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, through both bilateral assistance and international organizations. That support represents an application of the concept of human security, which Japan has been promoting, by protecting and empowering the children who are most vulnerable in armed conflicts. We have expended approximately $75 million over the past five years on the reintegration of child soldiers into society. That includes a financial contribution to Sri Lanka for the purpose of supporting job training for former child soldiers through the United Nations Human Security Fund. We are planning to make further financial contributions relating to the issue of child soldiers in such countries as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Mauritania and South Sudan.

Secondly, when addressing the agenda of children and armed conflict, the international community must pay attention to persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children. In the last five reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, more than 30 parties to conflicts were listed. Of those, 11 have been on the list for more than a decade. The Security Council should respond more firmly to such persistent perpetrators, with measures that include considering the possibility of an assets freeze. In that context, Japan welcomes the fact that parties to conflicts in Sri Lanka and Nepal have been delisted from the Secretary-General's reports. They were delisted because they achieved considerable progress in implementing the action plan that had been agreed on between them and the United Nations. It is important to study those cases to understand why the delistings were possible, because we believe those lessons could be applicable to similar situations in other countries.

Thirdly, one of the main objectives of United Nations peacekeeping operations is to protect children in conflict and post-conflict situations. Yet we hear cases where peacekeepers have been criticized for becoming violators of the rights of children. Is that not a disgrace to the reputation of the United Nations?

I would like to emphasize that United Nations peacekeeping operations should be a model in protecting children. We, as troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping operations, should recognize our responsibility to train our personnel at home so that they will not abuse children in the course of their duties but will protect them.

Finally, the children and armed conflict agenda is not only about child soldiers. There is also a growing recognition of the military use of and attacks against schools.

Japan pays great attention to the formulation of the draft Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. The work of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack is bearing fruit. Japan, for its part, is willing to participate in the future process of the Lucens Guidelines.

Children are sometimes exploited, intimidated, threatened and even killed all over the world. There are a number of measures to prevent those tragic cases, including providing assistance to countries in conflict and developing rules and standards to address new challenges. We are determined to contribute to protecting the rights of children by using those concrete actions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Riecken (Austria): We would like to sincerely thank Luxembourg for convening this important open debate today. Let me also express our appreciation for Luxembourg's leadership and tireless efforts on children and armed conflict in the Council. We welcome the briefings made, as well as the adoption of the resolution 2143 (2014) on children and armed conflict.

Austria associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Human Security Network statement to be delivered by the representative of Greece.

There is no doubt that the Security Council has elaborated an impressive and comprehensive framework for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Yet more efforts need to be devoted to a systematic implementation of the Security Council resolutions and the mainstreaming of child protection concerns into the Council's work.

Out of the 55 parties to conflict listed in the annex to the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245), the majority are persistent perpetrators that have been listed for at least five years, and 11 of them even for over 10 years. Austria therefore warmly welcomes the new campaign launched by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui and UNICEF to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces in conflict by 2016.

At the same time, we should not overlook the importance of United Nations engagement with and access to non-State armed groups and the continued efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the conclusion of action plans with non-State actors. After all, they constitute the vast majority of all the parties listed in the annexes. The Security Council should also make better use of the tools available and must be prepared to take vigorous action against persistent perpetrators, for example through the use of targeted sanctions.

As the results of the study entitled *Education under Attack 2014*, which was launched last week, clearly demonstrate, attacks against schools, teachers and students and incidents of the military use of schools are far more widespread and pervasive than previously documented and thus require more action. The Security Council should consistently, including in its country-specific work, condemn attacks against schools and their misuse. Against that backdrop, Austria welcomes the work by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack on the so-called draft Lucens guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict.

Last but not least, allow me to turn to the efforts by United Nations peacekeeping missions on child protection. Child protection advisors play a crucial role not only as a single point of contact within the mission but also in reaching out to all stakeholders responsible for children's rights and often also in monitoring the implementation of action plans.

In addition to the deployment of child protection advisers, ensuring appropriate training of peacekeepers on child protection is of critical importance. We therefore welcome the work carried out by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on developing training standards and are proud to contribute to the development of a specialized training for child protection advisers. Following the recent validation of the course materials, the first training course for child protection advisors will be held in the autumn of this year. Austria will also be hosting a United Nations training of trainers course on the protection of civilians and child protection in May this year.

In addition to ensuring that peacekeepers have the right skills to implement child protection mandates, they themselves and their conduct need to adhere to the United Nations high standards. Vetting procedures, in particular the United Nations human rights screening policy, as well as the United Nations human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, are important tools in that respect.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, we would to welcome Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, who is presiding over this important meeting. I duly note his remark that he personally visited the camps of Syrian refugees in Turkey. I hope that he will visit Syria itself so that he can see first-hand the conditions of millions — not just dozen hundreds or thousands — of Syrian children who suffer from mortar bombs and recruitment by armed terrorist groups, as is mentioned in the report of Ms. Zerrougui (A/68/267), and to which I will turn later. I hope that he will visit Syria so that he can get a complete picture from the the other viewpoint.

I note with interest the briefings made this morning and I take this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the Syrian Arab Republic to all international treaties, conventions and instruments which it acceded to and ratified at an early date, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols.

Syria has always been a pioneer in providing for all the needs of children and in promoting their rights and protection, in particular quality free education and medical services. This fact has been recognized in the reports of specialized United Nations agencies over decades. However, it is regrettable that the current crisis in Syria has led to inhumane extremist manifestations that are contrary to the Syrian values of moderation. Syrian children were the first to suffer under the practices of mercenaries and takfiris openly imported from all parts of the world to impose obscurantist Wahhabi ideas on our children and young people and commit the most horrific crimes against Syrian children. They recruit these children and youngsters and train them to commit the most horrific crimes of terror — slaughter, kidnapping, maiming, dismemberment, beheading with axes and swords, disemboweling pregnant women, hanging their foetuses on trees by the umbilical cord, and human and organ trafficking. Those are just some examples.

During scores of meetings of the Security Council, directly or indirectly related to Syria, I have never heard that one or more States with influence over the armed groups in Syria — some of which are members of the Council — has exercised any pressure on these terrorist armed groups to lift the blockade of a certain area in Syria or to stop the militarization of a hospital or a school in Syria, or to free religious leaders, priests, nuns and orphans who have been kidnapped for months or even years. I have not once heard that any of any States that exercises pressure on terrorist armed groups had pressed for the release of Syrian women and children who had been taken hostage, kidnapped and used as human shields, from Latakia to Deir ez-Zor, Al-Raqqa and Deraa. I have never heard of anybody who had pressured those terrorist armed groups to release women and children who were kidnapped after dozens and hundreds of them were slaughtered.

The great calamity is not that a group of criminals and terrorists should commit such acts; it lies in the fact that these terrorist groups are publically financed, supported and armed by the Governments of Arab, regional and international States that have vowed to take part in these grievous crimes and great sins. They lost no time and spared no effort in offering large sums of money, influential media and abhorrent sectarian incitement to undermine the social, educational and economic progress that has been achieved by my country, Syria.

Their aim has also been to subjugate the independence of the national political decisions of Syria, intentionally cover up the ongoing terrorism, destruction and sabotage in Syria, deplete its national wealth of oil and gas, and open the borders of neighbouring countries to terrorists and foreign mercenaries into Syrian territory under shameful pretexts that harm the image of Arabs and Muslims. Despite this tragic and bleak picture, some senior officials in the Secretariat still consider that these events are mere reports that have yet to be verified.

Despite all of these daunting and unprecedented challenges, the Syrian Government continues to make every effort in compliance with its commitments to protecting children. It has maintained its positive engagement with the United Nations to uncover the details of what is happening in Syria, notably the violations of children's rights as a result of the practices of armed terrorist groups.

The permanent delegation of the Arab Syrian Republic to the United Nations circulated an official memo to the members of the Security Council on 6 February, containing detailed and documented information and examples of the crimes committed by armed terrorist groups against Syrian children. We explained in the memo how these groups have launched systematic and repeated attacks on schools and hospitals, stolen their equipment and killed their staff. We provided the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the members of the Security Council with a list of 28 cases in which terrorist groups have targeted schools throughout Syria, and 54 cases of the killing, maiming and kidnapping of children. Unfortunately, no one in the Secretariat has made an effort to verify those reports or ask the Syrian Government for more details about them.

While terrorist armed groups continue to recruit Syrian children, boys and girls for their military operations, the relevant authorities in the Syrian Government are taking legal action with regard to these recruited children, in accordance with the law on the recruitment of children adopted on 6 May 2013, which criminalizes those who recruit children to take part in any form of combat. That is punishable by a term of 10 to 20 years of hard labour, reaching a life sentence if the child dies while in combat. It is very important to underscore that this law deals with the recruited children as victims by virtue of the juvenile code under Syrian law. They are placed in social protection centres, rather than in detention centres, where they reside until they face a fair trial and are immediately referred to rehabilitation institutions in cooperation with civil society and under the supervision of expert mentors.

In another violation of Syrian children's rights, certain foreign parties and satellite channels broadcasting from Arab Gulf Arab States recruit Syrian children to work for them as armed rebels against the authority of the State and as war correspondents, giving them cameras and communication equipment and sending them to unsafe areas to report the news, thereby jeopardizing their lives, of course, in a violation of all principles and instruments on the protection of the rights of the child. We call on the relevant agencies of the United Nations and the Special Representative Zerrougui to launch an immediate investigation of such shameful acts, especially since the competent authorities in Syria has detained one of the gangs that manages the recruitment of children. Their confessions were aired by Syrian television recently.

The Syrian Government, via the Health Ministry, continues to implement its programmes to promote child health care. It has launched the fourth stage of the vaccination campaign against polio, a disease that was eliminated more than 10 years ago in Syria. Having said that, everyone knows now that the spread of that virus in Syria was caused by infected individuals from the very armed terrorist groups that came to Syria from Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries.

We are extremely concerned over the ongoing tragic situation and grave violations against Syrian children in the camps of neighbouring countries. Despite the fact that all actors in the international, regional and non-governmental organizations, as well as the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, are aware of the blatant violations that our children face in these camps, as documented in their reports, we find it extremely bizarre that there is not a single reference to any such violations, including sexual violence, forced marriage, lack of access to education, the separation of family members in several camps, the violation of the rights to work and freedom of movement even from camp to camp, let alone the militarization of many of those camps and the recruitment of a large number of Syrian children by armed terrorist groups, whether under supervision or by the host Governments turning a blind eye to some of these cases. We are eseriously concerned that the United Nations has yet to take any tangible measure with the Governments of neighbouring countries to address this dangerous phenomenon.

The United Nations is called upon today to work impartially, transparently and effectively to adopt measures to protect Syrian child by reminding the Governments of Member States — some of which are members of the Council — of their commitments under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and to prompt the Governments of States that support, finance, train and facilitate the transfer of these armed terrorist and extremist groups to stop these acts immediately, and to urge those States that take illegal, unilateral and coercive measures to lift them immediately.

In conclusion, my country reaffirms that it will deal firmly with any form of human rights violations. It stresses its willingness to continue cooperating with the United Nations and partner regional and international organizations to uncover the truth of the situation in Syria, without politicizing, misleading or agitating public opinion, in order to put an end to all forms of violence against children in armed conflict and to punish the perpetrators and instigators of these acts wherever they come from.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Raja Zaib Shah (Malaysia): At the outset, allow me to take this opportunity to convey my congratulations to you, Mr. President, and Luxembourg on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, as well as on convening this open debate. My delegation also expresses its appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their briefings.

Malaysia is particularly concerned that armed conflicts in various parts of the world still plague children's lives, depriving them of their right to life and physical integrity, as reflected in the annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/HRC/25/46).

My delegation is perturbed at the thousands of children who are recruited, killed, maimed, abducted, subjected to sexual violence, indoctrinated, forced to commit atrocities, denied humanitarian access and deprived of health care. Despite the progress made thus far, more needs to be done in the area of the protection of the child in armed conflict.

The recruitment and use of child soldiers by parties to armed conflict is not only a war crime, it also affects a community's invaluable asset — its children. Children should be allowed to develop their potential as they traverse from childhood to maturity. Children are persons who must be protected during an important period of their development. Malaysia reaffirms its strong commitment to efforts to protect and promote the rights of children. We condemn the recruitment and use of children as soldiers by any party in conflict.

My delegation also believes that accountability for ending the impunity of those responsible is a duty under both domestic and international law. We cannot deny the fact that in many conflict situations the most vulnerable members of the population, particularly women and children, are targeted with impunity. My delegation is of the firm conviction that there should be no leniency or amnesty for crimes perpetrated on innocent children. In that regard, we call on Member States to steer their national accountability systems towards meeting international standards in order to establish effective accountability measures in the hope of bringing justice, dignity and rehabilitation for children victimized by armed conflict.

In 2005, the Secretary-General proposed the development of a monitoring and reporting mechanism in document S/2005/72. Malaysia feels that was a positive step in the right direction. We furthermore believe that such a mechanism would provide objective, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law, and on other violations and abuses committed against children. We would like to see further developments on the monitoring mechanism, as we believe that the mechanism would urge Member States and United Nations agencies to take action to protect children affected by armed conflict.

The discussion on children affected by armed conflict would not be complete without making reference to the role of United Nations peacekeepers. My delegation believes that training is an underpinning element in ensuring the effectiveness of the work of peacekeepers in protecting children. We underline that peacekeepers to be deployed in conflict areas must be exposed to the issues and instruments for the protection of children in the field. Such a mechanism would greatly assist peacekeepers in executing their duties and would further ensure better protection for children in armed conflict.

We are encouraged by the ongoing work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, other agencies of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations dealing with children affected by armed conflict. Malaysia takes note of the "Children, not soldiers" campaign of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016. We believe that the campaign should not only create awareness but should also encourage adherence by States to respect the rights of children.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Malaysia has undertaken efforts to ensure that the rights of its children are protected. On 12 April 2012, Malaysia further reaffirmed its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of children by acceding to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, namely, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Prior to that, in July 2009, Malaysia initiated its national policy on children and its national plan of action on children. Taken together, both sets of initiatives outline the Government of Malaysia's priorities to promote and protect the rights of children in Malaysia.

To conclude, Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to continue working together with the international community in advancing the agenda for the protection of children in armed conflict. Malaysia upholds the significance of resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1612 (2005), on children in armed conflict. We call on Member States to demonstrate political will and give attention to this important issue for us to better accord the necessary protection to children from the harms of conflict. Rest assured, Malaysia will continue to do its part in that regard.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mrs. Morgan (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The topic of this open debate is of great importance to my delegation. Mexico thanks Luxembourg and its Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Mr. Jean Asselborn, for making it possible for us to assess the progress in our common challenges in this area. Mexico believes that resolution 2143 (2014), adopted today, which we joined as a sponsor, strengthens our commitment to ensure that children be children, not soldiers.

Despite undeniable progress in recent years on the agenda of children and armed conflict made as a result of the cooperation amng the Organization, Governments and civil society, thousands of children continue to be recruited as soldiers, sexually abused and excluded from the right to education and other basic services. The efforts and resources devoted by the international community since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999) makes it possible for us today to use tools to monitor and prevent the recruitment of children in specific contexts, but it is clear that those are not enough. As with other functions of the Organization in the maintenance of peace and international security, the agenda of children and armed conflict calls for financial, human and technical capacities that are tailored to the needs in the field.

The novel tactics used by any parties to conflict, such as attacks on schools and hospitals, call for equally strong, effective and innovative responses from the international community. Mexico believes that the political will we have achieved around this challenge should be accompanied by a robust strategy to strengthen national and international capacities, especially in the justice and security sectors, from prevention to reintegration. In order to prevent the recruitment of children, we need a legal framework that responds to impunity and makes it possible for us to have effective age verification mechanisms. The Council in particular, as well as the United Nations in general, can provide decisive support to ensure that national plans and strategies in the post-conflict stage include care for children among their priorities.

My country condemns attacks on schools and hospitals as a tactic of war, as well as the use of unmanned aerial vehicles and explosives in densely populated areas, given the impact on the civilian population and on minors in particular. Such practices violate obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law.

We welcome the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, launched yesterday by the Office of the Special Representative and the UNICEF, and reiterate our absolute commitment to its objectives. We also acknowledge Member States for having signed action plans in that regard. We also believe it is necessary to redouble our efforts to ensure respect for the rights of children by non-State actors. To that end, we propose devoting greater finacial, human and political resources.

We recognize the work of Sanctions Committees that have included in their working criteria grave violations of the rights of children, and we urge the Security Council to adopt similar parameters in all its other committees.

Lastly, Mexico calls on the Council to continue including specific provisions to protect children in peacekeeping operations and special political missions. We call on troop- and police-contributing countries to such missions to train personnel before deployment so that they can respond in a timely fashion to challenges in the field.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Kyaw Tin (Myanmar): My delegation wishes to thank the Luxembourg presidency for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. We also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui, UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their statements this morning.

Over the past 15 years, there has been considerable progress in advancing the agenda of protecting children in armed conflicts, which has resulted in the development of a sound framework for a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

As a country fully committed to doing away with the involvement of children in armed conflicts, Myanmar has voiced its full support for the campaign "Children, not soldiers", launched yesterday by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016. We believe that goal could be achieved if the current momentum of our cooperation with the United Nations is reinforced and supported by the global community. We hope that this time-bound initiative will be able to garner broader international support for providing technical and financial assistance to speed up the implementation of our action plans.

Since Myanmar embarked upon a peaceful democratic transition, the Government has made every possible effort to improve human rights in every aspect.

One of the bold steps taken by the Government since then was the signing of an action plan with the United Nations in 2012 to end underage recruitment.

In Myanmar we have a strong legal base that prohibits forced conscription and recruitment under 18. Yet, in the past, there have been incidents of children finding their way into the armed forces for various reasons, such as relationship problems in their communities, a lack of proper documents to identify their age, a lack of employment opportunities and a weakness in recruitment offices and their procedures.

The Government recognized this ugly problem and has taken serious steps to tackle the issue since 2004. Today we are pleased to say that Myanmar has made significant progress in implementing its action plan over the past 18 months. As I already explained in detail yesterday at the launch of the campaign, I shall refrain from repeating the measures taken by the Government in responding to the issue. But I wish to stress again that in Myanmar every complaint of violation received was properly checked and all underage children found were discharged and reintegrated. Since the launching of the action plan, 272 children have been discharged and reintegrated.

Offenders of child recruitment, be they civilian or military personnel, have been punished according to the law. Some of that progress has been reflected in the most recent report of the International Labour Organization on Myanmar, which states that

> "[t]here has been a good response to the ongoing activities of underage recruitment, including on awareness-raising among military personnel and the release of underage recruits."

The action plan was also incorporated in the training curriculum for my country's military officials.

We are pleased to have facilitated the successful visit to Myanmar of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, led by Ambassador Sylvie Lucas of Luxembourg last year, to assess the situation on the ground. We are looking at the recommendations provided by the Working Group, including becoming a party to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Following the visit, the Myanmar authorities agreed once again to extend the current plan of action.

Difficulties in age-verification remain a challenge for the identification of underage soldiers due to an absence of national registration cards. We hope that challenge will be resolved with the launching of a nationwide census later this month. We are hopeful that the tangible progress made in the implementation of the action plan in Myanmar will lead to the delisting of the Myanmar national armed forces in the near future.

As we have stated time and time again, the best way to protect children from armed conflict is to end such conflicts. The Government's peace efforts have resulted in striking ceasefire agreements with almost all ethnic armed groups. A nationwide ceasefire agreement is just around the corner, auguring well for the protection of children. The prevalence of peace and stability is creating an environment conducive to our efforts at rural development, poverty reduction and job creation, which will help to deter the inclusion of children in armed groups. National efforts to end child recruitment should also be accompanied by well-funded reintegration and development programmes to provide a livelihood and vocational training for former child soldiers to restart their lives with dignity in their new environment.

My delegation is pleased to see that the Council is taking a cooperative and constructive approach to reach its goal of protecting children. However, we are concerned about the current definition of "persistent perpetrators", which is inaccurate and misleading. In our view, if a party, although listed for more than five years, is making good progress in implementing its action plan with strong political commitment, it should not be classified as a persistent perpetrator. We believe that the current practice of a cooperative approach rather than a punitive one would better serve the purpose and will win the trust and cooperation of the parties concerned. Inclusion and delisting from the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General should not be based on a subjective political decision, but on certain criteria or standards.

In conclusion, Myanmar reiterates its pledge to continue to work together with the United Nations on the action plan to achieve the goal set by the United Nations global campaign "Children, not soldiers".

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): At the outset, allow me to thank Luxembourg for organizing this open debate on a very important subject. I also thank Ms. Zerrougui, Mr. Ladsous and Mr. Lake for their interesting and thought-provoking statements. By the same token, I welcome to the Chamber and thank for his remarks Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh. He probably knows better than any one of us here what we are really talking about today.

I should like to congratulate the presidency on the adoption of a timely resolution on this matter, which Estonia also sponsored. Resolution 2143 (2114) represents a step forward in our common endeavour.

Estonia fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. Let me stress some topics that are especially important for my country.

Fifteen years have passed since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), and significant progress has been made since then. Nevertheless, we in the United Nations are used to reading, listening and talking about the atrocities throughout the world that concern children. Among others, most of us have read the recently issued report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children in Syria (S/2014/31). We have read that more than 10,000 children have died as a direct result of the conflict there. We have also read that thousands more have been injured and mutilated. We know that more than 1 million children are now living as refugees, and millions more are displaced within their own country. Some children have been separated from their families. Others have seen their parents, brothers or sisters being killed or injured. It sounds as if something regular is going on in the world on a daily basis. It can happen that we do not even think any more about the real persons behind those huge numbers or about the thousands and millions of real children and their suffering. What can we do to make a difference for those children? I should like to stress three points: education, accountability and capacity-building.

Education is the best and most effective prevention tool we have. Habits, norms and mindsets can only be changed through education. Only through education can we ensure a better future for these children. Let me stress, therefore, that schools should be for children and should never, under any conditions, be used for military purposes. Also, every child continuing his or her daily schooling should be kept away from the heinous hands of warlords willing to conscript them. Education also means empowerment, and if one has decent job opportunities one is less exposed to armed conflict.

Secondly, with regard to accountability, although ending impunity for grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict is crucial to halt and prevent these crimes, perpetrators are rarely held to account. National courts have the primary responsibility in that regard. Sometimes they are not able to do that. The international community, therefore, should assist in strengthening national judicial systems to ensure accountability, including through the development of legislation criminalizing violations against children.

However, where national courts still lack the capacity or the political will to investigate and prosecute grave crimes against children in armed conflict, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has a crucial role to play. The Council itself has on numerous occasions, as in the resolution adopted today, acknowledged that the fight against impunity for atrocious crimes, including against children, has been strengthened through the work of the ICC. For the ICC to fulfil its mandate, effective cooperation and assistance by all States, the Council, and international and regional organizations is essential.

To achieve its commitment to deal effectively with perpetrators, the Council could increase pressure on them by including violations against children in the mandates of all Sanctions Committees and by improving the exchange of information among the Council, Sanctions Committees and the ICC to include individuals on sanctions lists sought by the Court. While it is important to work with Government authorities to end violations against children in armed conflict, it is also crucial to engage and conclude action plans with non-State armed groups.

Thirdly, with regard to capacity-building and concrete actions by the United Nations, providing specific operational predeployment and in-mission training for peacekeepers so as to enable them to make the right decisions while operating in difficult situations is one of the most important issues. We believe that predeployment training should be a rule rather than an exception, and we commend the recent developments in that regard. We would like to stress the crucial role of child protection advisers, who should be deployed in peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding missions and special political missions. They must be deployed in a consistent manner, and the child protection capacities of the different missions must be reinforced.

Finally, let me express Estonia's full support for the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, launched yesterday. Its aim is to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces by 2016. Indeed, the goal sounds ambitious. In the United Nations we rarely see goals that have to be reached in only two years, but Estonia believes in such ambitious goals. Children throughout the world deserve the time to be children: they should not be parents, they should not be used as cheap labour and they should not be soldiers. Their blood should not be shed for the political, ideological or economic goals of grown-ups. We will be looking forward to the next Secretary-General's report in June, and truly hope that progress will already be reflected by then. No ambition should be too ambitious on this topic.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to participate in this debate.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada thanks the Security Council for this opportunity, and the Luxembourg presidency for holding this debate. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the work undertaken by the Council to protect children.

The robust system of child protection built by the Security Council has been judiciously implemented in the field by key partners such as UNICEF and others. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF have worked tirelessly to raise awareness and to address the rights and protection of girls and boys affected by armed conflict. Canada commends their efforts.

(*spoke in French*)

The international community has made a lot of progress in the protection of children who find themselves in conflict-related situations. Much remains to be done in this area, however, as we witness the devastating impacts of the conflicts in Syria, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name but a few.

As we work to ensure that Government armed forces uphold their obligations, we continue to call on the Security Council for action to hold persistent perpetrators to account. I am referring here to those who continue, year after year, without accountability, to commit violations against children. In that regard, Canada encourages dialogue between the United Nations and non-State actors to advance child protection in armed conflict, and urges action plans that result from these dialogues to be implemented with time-bound deadlines.

(*spoke in English*)

Both formal and informal child-protection systems are important. Formal systems include donor support for civic registration and vital statistics, with data collection that is disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, wealth quintile and other factors. That, in turn, would contribute to establishing age-verification procedures for recruitment in the military. Informal systems include active participation by families, communities and children themselves to create and foster protective environments that contribute to preventing recruitment and other grave violations. Capacity-building is an essential element of the protection of children. Experience has shown that the protection of children in conflict situations is very complex and requires the application of diverse and specialized medical, psychological and social skills and knowledge.

We should support effective predeployment training in child protection for personnel involved in field missions, including military and police personnel. It is also crucial that such personnel be screened to prevent individuals who have themselves committed violations against children from serving with the United Nations. That goes to the very heart of the United Nations mandate.

Canada condemns in the strongest terms the targeting of schools and hospitals. We welcome the new report from the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, which found that over the past five years armed non-State groups and State military and security forces have attacked thousands of schoolchildren, teachers and schools in at least 70 countries worldwide. In 13 countries more than 500 attacks alone have been recorded. Since 2009 there have been more than 1,100 attacks on education facilities in Afghanistan, including arson attacks, explosions and suicide bombings. In Colombia 140 teachers were killed in four years, and more than 1000 received death threats. Canada urges all Member States to act to protect schools, teachers and students from attack and to hold perpetrators accountable.

(*spoke in French*)

We are alarmed that more than 10,000 children have been killed and 3,000 schools damaged or destroyed over the course of the conflict in Syria. Approximately 3 million children are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Canada calls on all parties to the conflict immediately to end all violations and abuses against children and to facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access in compliance with the new resolution 2139 (2014).

(*spoke in English*)

Canada also deplores the practice of using schools for military purposes during armed conflict and urges States to restrict the use of schools for any military operations. Schools ought to be safe and protected and must never serve as barracks, fighting positions, detention centres, interrogation or torture sites, or weapons depots in conflicts.

Canada is committed to ensuring that the rights of children are always protected. Be assured that we will continue to fight against the unspeakable violations that threaten the safety, dignity and lives of girls and boys in situations of armed conflict in every corner of the world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka): I wish to join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate under the presidency of Luxembourg. We welcome the presence today of His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg. We also thank the speakers who briefed the Council today.

Children in armed conflict is a profoundly disturbing subject for us in Sri Lanka. We went through a dark and brutal conflict during which, according to UNICEF records, thousands of children were recruited as child soldiers and were deprived of their precious childhood. Mercifully, our war on terrorism ended in May 2009 and the sad era of forcible child recruitment for combat by the terror group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was brought to a close — but not before thousands of children paid a heavy price with their lives.

According to UNICEF in a report published in 2011, more than 60 per cent of the LTTE's fighting cadre from 1983 to 2002 consisted of boys and girls less than 18 years of age. UNICEF recorded more than 5,700 cases of child recruitment by the LTTE from 2003 to 2009. Human Rights Watch has suggested a figure of more than 21,000. Following the tsunami, orphaned children were harvested for combat purposes. Child soldiers were also used as suicide bombers, especially girls. Each family was forced to surrender even very young children for combat purposes in the final stages of the conflict. The LTTE had no scruples about sacrificing thousands of children in the frontline of combat. Children were given cyanide capsules by their leaders to commit suicide to avoid capture.

At the Geneva peace talks in February 2006, the LTTE publicly conceded that it was holding thousands of children as combatants. With the end of the conflict, 594 child combatants — 231 girls and 363 boys between the ages of 12 and 18 years — were taken into custody by the security forces. The Government adopted a caring attitude with those former child combatants, treating them with a sensitivity rarely seen elsewhere, as victims and not as perpetrators of violent crimes. They were placed in institutional rehabilitation centres and received access to education, vocational training, health care and psycho-social support. Following their rehabilitation process, they have all been reunited with their immediate or extended families. That happened as early as May 2010. The rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers was a priority for Sri Lanka. Family reunions are continuing to take place with the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNICEF, which has continued to assist with its extensive background of experience and goodwill.

We have always placed the welfare and protection of children at the heart of our policy agenda. The traditional extended family structure in Sri Lanka prioritizes the welfare and education of children. Therefore, forcible child recruitment was excruciating for the affected families in the former conflict-affected areas, as well as for our society at large. I should like to mention that in Sri Lanka all children are required to attend school. Attendance at the primary school level is now close to 100 per cent, including in the former conflict-affected areas.

Let me illustrate the pain and personal loss behind the statistics, with the story of one former child soldier as described by UNICEF. Rajeewan was only 13 years old when he was abducted in 2007 by the LTTE while visiting his sister's family in the Vanni region in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. His many attempts to escape were unsuccessful. He said, "I longed to see my family. I wanted to go home". He was subsequently placed in the armed ranks of the LTTE and compelled to fight with it until the final stages of the conflict. After the end of the conflict, he surrendered to the Sri

Lankan army and was allowed to return home after a year at a rehabilitation centre. The teenager, who left his family at 13, finally returned home as a 19-year-old battle-hardened grownup. Rajeewan lost seven years of his young life to the cruel taskmasters who recruited him. The conflict took away his childhood and disrupted his education, leaving him no option but to look for unskilled work on his release. As he also said,

> "I was happy to be finally home, but I was worried about my future and what I could do to earn a living and help my ageing parents".

Today, almost five years after the end of the conflict, child recruitment is a distant but ever-recurring memory. The story of Rajeewan had a happy ending. With the help of UNICEF, he attended a vocational training programme and obtained qualifications that led to a permanent job as an icecream vendor, selling icecream in villages and towns. Now he says he loves his job and, more than anything, he is able to help his family.

Sri Lanka made its zero-tolerance policy on child recruitment a non-negotiable condition. Through sustained political will and proactive efforts, the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child combatants under our campaign entitled "Bring Back the Child" was achieved. Sri Lanka has criminalized the recruitment of children for armed combat.

Sri Lanka's approach has had a positive effect on the country's reconciliation process. Former child soldiers were able to put their pasts behind them and rebuild their lives as the Government adopted the overarching principle of restorative justice and not retributive justice, consistent with our cultural heritage and reconciliation efforts. For us, revenge and retribution was not an option. The opportunity was given to 273 child combatants to continue with their formal education at Hindu College in Colombo, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, prior to their reintegration into their families. Following reunification, they were also given the freedom to seek admission to a school of their choice. Thirty-five former child combatants returned to Hindu College to continue their junior and senior high school education, and 321 former combatants opted to undertake vocational training conducted by the vocational training authority of Sri Lanka.

Among the adult beneficiaries who were once recruited as children, a system called the Catch-up Education Programme has been initiated in liaison with the Ministry of Education to enable them to continue their formal education. In 2010, 175 beneficiaries completed the national Grade 10 examination, while 361 beneficiaries completed the national Grade 12 examination — 91 passed their ordinary level examinations and 222 passed the advanced level examinations.

Let me briefly outline some actions taken by the Government of Sri Lanka over the years on this vital issue.

In terms resolution 1612 (2005), Sri Lanka voluntarily submitted to the Security Council monitoring process and established the Sri Lanka Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting in July 2006. Sri Lanka fully cooperated with the Special Representative, the Council's Working Group and UNICEF on the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child combatants.

During the entire conflict period, basic and essential services such as health care and education were provided unimpeded to all affected communities in the north and the east, with particular attention on safeguarding the rights and needs of children. The lessons learned and reconciliation commission report comprehensively details the supply of essential services to those areas. In 2006, the consultative committee on humanitarian assistance, an apex consultative body to ensure a coordinated humanitarian response, was established following a request by the co-chairs to the peace process — Japan, the United States, the European Union and Norway.

Sri Lanka's experience in ensuring the overall well-being of children in conflict is unique. Even during the height of the conflict, the Government agreed to a cessation of hostilities to ensure that the national qualifying examinations were held in the conflict zones to enable students to sit their examinations every year. We were also able to reach agreement on ceasing hostilities to ensure that the polio vaccination programme could be carried out in the conflict zones. In recognition of those dedicated efforts, UNICEF, in *The State of the World's Children 2008*, documented and commended Sri Lanka as the best achiever in our subregion despite a long-standing conflict. UNICEF also commended Sri Lanka in its publication entitled *Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity*.

Following the end of the conflict, special initiatives were undertaken to provide access to health services for children through a collaborative mechanism between the national child-protection authority and the department of paediatrics of Colombo University.

In the post-conflict phase, significant attention was paid to restoring and rebuilding schools. Today, 1,630 schools in the former conflict-affected areas have been restored.

An armed group released all combatants under a tripartite action plan with UNICEF and the Government. It has also since transformed itself into a legitimate political party by joining the democratic process. The former adult cadres are very much part of the democratic process. A former child soldier of that armed group was elected as the first chief minister of the Eastern Province.

The Government has established women's and children's police desks staffed with female police officers in police stations in the north and the east. Specially trained police officers function at such desks, which provide an enabling and protective environment for children, women and girls and their parents to report incidents of abuse and exploitation. The network is also linked to the national child-protection authority. Sexual and gender-based violence help desks are located in hospitals in the districts formerly affected by the conflict.

Due to the progress made and the true commitment of the Government with regard to its children and former child soldiers, Sri Lanka was delisted from the Secretary-General's list of shame in June 2012. Sri Lanka successfully completed Security Council-mandated programmes to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

Finally, Sri Lanka continues with its efforts to help and support former child soldiers to rebuild their lives. The Government of Sri Lanka is appreciative of United Nations agencies such as UNICEF, and countries such as Japan, which have made key contributions to the Government's efforts to reintegrate former child soldiers into society.

The Secretary-General's 2013 report on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245) notes that the evolving character and tactics of armed conflict are creating unprecedented threats to children. We encourage greater engagement between Member States and the United Nations for the better protection of all children who are affected by armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate, and through you I wish to express our appreciation of Minister Jean Asselborn's personal leadership in this matter. I should like to thank the Secretary-General, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui and Mr. Anthony Lake for their presentations. Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh's testimony about his experience as a child soldier in Sierra Leone reminded us of the horrors to which some children are still subject to this day.

Stopping the plight endured by children in armed conflict is a moral imperative. Children in conflict situations are particularly vulnerable. Their suffering extends in time, in the form of traumas that burden entire generations for many years after the resolution of a crisis. The Security Council is right to help increase awareness about violations and to be more involved in preventing and halting violence against children in cases determined by the Council to constitute threats to international peace and security.

As the concept note prepared by the Mission of Luxembourg points out (S/2014/144, annex), the consideration of the agenda related to children in armed conflict has significantly progressed in the past years. The international community has been able to take decisive steps to confront the gravest challenges regarding children in conflict. The initiative launched by Special Representative Zerrougui and UNICEF to end the recruitment of children by Government forces by 2016 deserves our full support. We are convinced that, with political will by all parties involved, that target can be achieved. Nevertheless, the reality on the ground in many conflicts remains a source of serious concern.

The appalling situation of children in Syria was rightly described by the Secretary-General as unspeakable and unacceptable. The High Commissioner for Human Rights reminded us in her presentation to the General Assembly on the humanitarian situation in Syria that grave violations against children have been committed by both sides, with documented cases of detentions, torture, sexual violence and executions. The number of schools and hospitals that have been seriously affected by the conflict is alarming. Those acts violate the most fundamental rules of international humanitarian law. To deprive children of education and access to health is to deprive them of paramount tools to build a peaceful society and jeopardize the future of the entire nation.

The plight of Syrian children turned refugees as the result of the conflict is also very telling about the serious consequences of the military option that some have been promoting and seem to continue to believe in. Brazil is acutely aware of the increasing pressure faced by neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees.

Those facts must not be regarded merely as troubling statistics. The emotional impact of the conflict on young Syrians has disturbing after-effects. We cannot simply hope that Syrian children will prove to be as bold, courageous and resilient as Mr. Sawaneh from Sierra Leone. The very touching and troubling reports regarding the suffering of children in Syria must awaken our moral conscience and collective responsibility in order to promote an urgent and peaceful solution to the conflict on the basis of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex) and the efforts of Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi.

Brazil has been contributing to humanitarian initiatives to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, including children and Syrian refugees. In response to the call made by High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, Brazil is facilitating entry visas for Syrian nationals seeking asylum in our country.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Afghanistan, in the Central African Republic and in other conflict situations, children continue to bear a heavy burden. Abuses against children are perpetrated, moreover, even in situations on the Council's agenda that are not currently of open conflict. A report issued by Amnesty International last week underscores the dire scenario faced by Palestinian children under occupation in the West Bank. We call on Israeli forces to abide by their obligations under international human rights law and humanitarian law, with special attention to the situation of Palestinian children. Reports of harassment and intimidation are particularly distressing and impact negatively on the perspectives for peaceful and harmonious coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians in future. Such abuses must cease forthwith if the two sides are to build an environment conducive to peace and stability, as supported by the international community.

In order for crimes against children in situations of conflict to be eradicated, perpetrators must be brought to justice. International efforts to ensure that accountability is upheld have been greatly enhanced by the role of the International Criminal Court in prosecuting individuals accused of violations against children and by its deterrent effect. Peacekeeping missions may also have a role to play — as long as they have the adequate capabilities to perform their protection tasks — both through the protection of civilians in immediate danger and through the work of child protection advisers.

As in many other situations, in the case of children and armed conflict the Security Council should also pay greater attention to the benefits of prevention. The promotion of sustainable development, with social inclusion and food and nutritional security, can certainly contribute to conflict prevention, and therefore to avoid bringing conflict to the doorsteps of millions of children. An improvement in living conditions and, as a consequence, the establishment of a safe environment for children and youth to pursue their educational and cultural development, are vital factors to avoid the recruitment of children by armed groups

In conclusion, let me once more underscore Brazil's firm commitment to the protection of children in situations of conflict. When serving as a member of the Security Council, Brazil worked actively for the adoption of resolutions addressing this critical issue, resolutions such as 1612 (2005) and 1998 (2011). We will continue to enhance our cooperation with the United Nations system and to make use of our bilateral channels to ensure due attention is given to halting violence against the most vulnerable. Brazil joins the Security Council's efforts to break the cycle of violence and to spare children the direst consequences of adults' wars.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by cordially commending you on organizing this debate and on the excellent chairmanship of Luxembourg of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. I also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I align myself fully with the statement of the European Union.

We also have circulated the written text of the statement by the delegation of Spain, so I will try to extract the three or four most basic ideas. The first has to do with the use of schools in armed conflicts; the second with the need to adopt a completely cross-cutting focus on fighting this scourge, which is the use of children in armed conflicts; the third is the need to reinforce and redouble efforts at prevention; and I will conclude with the views of Spain on this issue.

First, with regard to schools, although progress has been made, it is still true that recent events have demonstrated that schools continue to be used in armed conflicts as real powder kegs. Proof of this is that more than 500 attacks on schools have taken place over the past year. The use of schools for military ends is clearly documented in current conflicts, as was just mentioned by the Ambassador of Brazil. It should be recognized that the fundamental right of a child to education and the use of a child as a weapon of war are at opposite ends of the spectrum. We must not allow this to happen. It is perhaps worthwhile exploring the idea of having markings for schools so that they would not be subject to attack in armed conflicts.

The second idea I wanted to bring up was the cross-cutting issue. The use of children in armed conflicts is so serious that we need a cross-cutting focus in the entire United Nations system. It is not an action that falls solely to the Security Council and its Sanctions Committees. Quite the opposite, thas perspective must be incorporated into the funds and programmes of the United Nations. It is also the responsibility of the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission. Only through the general involvement of all the funds and programmes in all of the main and subsidiary bodies of the United Nations will we be able to achieve our goals effectively.

The third idea is prevention. In that regard, I share the idea brought up by the Ambassador of Brazil that the best way to prevent the use of children in armed conflicts is by preventing the conflicts themselves. But for lack of this, an absolutely essential element is awareness. Let me recall the event organized by the Mission of Luxembourg yesterday when its wonderful campaign to fight against the use of children under the motto "Children, not soldiers" was launched. I am proud to repeat once again that Spain has enthusiastically joined the campaign and we have announced a contribution of €30,000 to that end.

Also when it comes to prevention, a few days ago I had the honour to present at the United Nations an outstanding short film, which was coincidentally a Spanish one, entitled *That Wasn't Me*. The film tells the story of the tragedy that is the use of a child in an armed conflict. As someone said, the film has the great merit of telling a story that could in fact be true, earning it an Oscar nomination at the Hollywood Academy Awards.

Turning to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/245), my delegation notes with some concern that only four of the 11 groups listed in the reports in the past 10 years have signed action plans to put an end to violations. It goes without saying that the delegation of Spain firmly supports the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report as to the measures to be taken in the Security Council.

In conclusion, Spain places great importance on the efforts of the international community and of the United Nations to put an end to this scourge, which is a violation of the rights of children in armed conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Honduras.

Ms. Flores (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased to address the Security Council as part of the open debate under the Luxembourg's outstanding presidency, with a view to contributing constructively to the consideration and discussion of a topic of such importance that touches such a sensitive chord at the Organization: the situation of children in armed conflicts.

While the exploitation of any human being is reprehensible, it is all the more so when children are involved. The use of minors in conflicts by armed organized groups violates ethical standards and international legal principles. Besides being a merciless practice, it is an unforgivable violation of human rights. Innumerable defenceless innocents should not be used as human shields. It is inconceivable that they should be forced to place or deactivate mines, thereby endangering their precious lives. That makes it imperative that States today take a greater responsibility to support the efforts, processes and mechanisms at the United Nations to prevent the recruitment and participation of girls and boys in armed conflict and to ensure that they are protected from hostilities.

We are not unaware of the fact that progress has been made over the past two decades. In 1993 the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to deal with the issue, commissioning Graça Machel to conduct a study of the impact of armed conflict on children. The recommendations of her report (A/51/306) led to major initiatives such as the creation of the position of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the rights and protection of children trapped in armed conflicts, who has done major work in recent years and today has undertaken a campaign, together with the UNICEF, to put an end by 2016 to the recruitment and use of children by the security forces of Governments in such situations.

Nevertheless, as has been noted, the greatest responsibility for abuse and violations included in the lists of the Secretary-General falls on non-State armed actors. The recommendation recently made to the Office of the Special Representative to promote the approval and application of action plans against such agents is appropriate, as well as is identifying how to hold accountable those who commit crimes against children.

It is commendable that, since 1998, the Security Council held debates and adopted resolutions contributing to the current monitoring and detailed reports by countries and promoting diplomatic initiatives and humanitarian initiatives intended to put an end to the barbarous infraction of using children as hostages in armed conflicts. The Council has also aimed at strengthening the agenda in all member countries by strengthening national legal capacity, measures to prevent recruitment and programmes of rehabilitation and reintegration into civil society. Indispensable in that regard is the assistance of regional organizations and the support of donors to implement action plans and provide all the information needed for the general public. But that is not enough.

Central America has not been removed from the scourge of armed conflicts that affected the region in the 1980s. Since then there has been modest progress to reach peace and security through democracy and social investment for development. Even though these are major achievements, they are not enough to respond to the new challenges we face. It is inevitable that nations with limited resources and so many needs in precarious situations find children to be the first victims of imbalance. That is not just a problem of the lack of security but also of seeking the social and economic causes of this insecurity aggravated by the vulnerability of a territory that is easily used as a bridge for the trafficking of illegal substances and of people where the arsenal of clandestine weapons conspires against peace. That is a cocktail of precarious circumstances that leads to explosive results. The violence drags in many minors, who are subject to all kinds of abuse.

While those situations do not fit into the specific cases of armed conflict and do not figure on the lists of the Secretary-General submitted to the Council, we believe that they are both tragic and pertinent. This phenomenon should be studied in depth as a priority. To that end, we respectfully call with great energy for the Organization to provide the attention needed. In the same way that it responded to the problem of child soldiers, it should find the initiatives, mechanisms and recommendations needed to protect the young people in our region who are trapped in equally disquieting conflicts. Each of their stories is a moving one; their repercussions and the ability to contain them goes beyond our domestic capacity, while the terror they entail goes beyond our national borders. Together they threaten international peace and security.

My country is making herculean efforts to defend itself against the growing infrastructure of organized crime and criminal groups. We have begun to reverse that pernicious trend — more through our own efforts than as a result of assistance — but the levels of insecurity continue to be unacceptable. The roiling violence drags in hundreds of girls and boys, either as victims or as bullies. It does not matter what terminology we use. Quite simply, they are victims. Any expectation for the future of the country is unfortunately being lost.

In terms of the number of lives being turned upside down there are less damaging wars, as compared to the violence that is eating away at our societies. The harm of this scourge is not measured necessarily by the drugs distributed in the markets but, rather, by the horror and pain caused by so much death. The unrestricted use of children recruited by gangs to serve as "mules" in criminal activities such as extortion is an abominable practice that, in the worst of cases, turns children into hired killers. Beyond family disintegration and economic exclusion, which makes them easy prey for organized crime, is the impossibility of escaping from it once they are identified or recruited.

In those circumstances, my delegation believes that the situation of young people and children subjected to social environments of violence, insecurity and extreme vulnerability should be studied in a broader framework including not just child soldiers or those enmeshed in conflicts but by adding another dimension to the worldwide effort to protect children and give them the security and opportunities they deserve.

This is nothing more than a respectful call to the Security Council and the international community to take the steps that conscience dictates. There is no doubt that we can draw closer to the peace we long for if work together for a global society that is increasingly more fair and equitable.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Greece.

Mr. Spinellis (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Human Security Network, namely, Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand, and on behalf of the Republic of South Africa as an observer.

The Network is a cross-regional group of States that promotes human security as a people-centred, comprehensive and prevention-oriented approach for achieving peace, development and human rights. The protection of civilians in armed conflicts is a core matter for the Network.

First, I should like to express my appreciation to Luxembourg for taking the initiative to convene this very important meeting and for the comprehensive and stimulating concept note (S/2014/144, annex). We welcome the holding of this debate to tackle this critical matter. We also welcome the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014), which enables us to proceed with a successful way forward.

The Human Security Network also welcomes the launching of the campaign "Children, not soldiers", initiated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, in collaboration with other United Nations partners, with a view to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016.

The Human Security Network remains concerned by the numbers of children that are negatively affected by conflict and post-conflict situations, as mentioned by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Since Graça Machel's seminal report (A/51/150) recognized the impact of armed conflict on children, millions of children have continued to be caught amid armed conflicts, not only as mere bystanders but as targets of multiple acts of violence, such as attacks against schools, mutilations and sexual abuse, as well as hunger, disease and exploitation as tools of war. Such children are subjected to death and suffering and are consequently transfigured into victims of terror and fear. We therefore remain deeply concerned for children's safety in all armed conflicts, including in Syria, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and many other places. Furthermore, we strongly deplore the use of schools as detention and torture centres.

This is a grave and urgent matter, and it is therefore essential to shift our focus to action plan adoption and implementation as a practical way forward. Action plans are vital strategic tools in order to end these horrendous violations against children in situations of conflict. It is therefore important for concerned Member States to pursue concrete, time-bound action plans and to commit to action plan implementation through national-level strategies. We acknowledge that respect should also be given to the time frame of the action plans, and non-compliance should result in direct consequences for those concerned.

The importance of strengthening national accountability mechanisms is also essential. It is vital to ensure an adequate child-protection mandate and to place importance on the monitoring and reporting of violations. We highlight the monitoring and reporting of violations, which should be upheld and considered as noteworthy tools, to mitigate the ongoing effects of impunity. That should be accompanied by political dialogue, demarches, multilateral cooperation and mainstreaming the issue of children in armed conflict in order to advocate for the protection of children.

The Security Council is encouraged to exert pressure on perpetrators and to apply the necessary measures to address these violations. That includes imposing lawful consequences for perpetrators. Stronger collective commitment to the responsibility for dealing effectively with persistent perpetrators of violations against children in armed conflict is encouraged of all States.

It is the responsibility of all States to investigate and prosecute those responsible for violations against children. It is therefore important to develop legislation criminalizing violations against children and to develop the necessary prosecutorial and investigative capacities. In that regard, we reiterate the importance of ensuring universal registration, including late birth registration, in order to investigate and verify the age of recruits and ensure protection of those under 18 years of age from active military service. Furthermore, Member States are encouraged to take the necessary steps to end violations such as the military use of schools and to hold perpetrators accountable for violations that have already been committed.

The Human Security Network highlights the importance of focusing on the prevention of future violations, and of restoring and integrating those who have been affected by conflict through protection and relief. The Arms Trade Treaty is a step forward towards the protection of children in armed conflict, as its provisions establish that exporting States shall take into account the risk of covered conventional arms or items being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of violence against children.

The implementation of concrete primary prevention strategies is imperative. That should include sustainable ways to ensure an age-verification process in recruitment procedures, measures to ensure that children have birth certificates, and education programmes to inform communities on national and international laws pertaining to recruitment and the consequent reporting of unlawful recruitment practices.

We underscore the importance of peacekeeping missions and the provision of key psychosocial services to children and their families affected by armed conflict. We must also aim to support national institutions and mechanisms that protect civilians in armed conflict.

The Human Security Network urges Member States to keep concerns relating to children high on the international agenda and remains committed to, and diligent in, the implementation of resolutions relevant to the topic, including resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1998 (2011), as well as resolution 2143 (2014), adopted by the Security Council today, which contains important provisions to ensure and protect the right of the child to education. The members of the Human Security Network are dedicated and committed to responding to the issues that have been raised.

I should now like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Greece welcomes the holding of this debate to tackle this critical matter. We also welcome the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014), which enables us to keep up the momentum to proceed to a successful way forward.

Greece aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union.

It has already been established that the impact of armed conflict on children is a grave and urgent matter. It is therefore essential to shift our focus to the implementation of Security Council resolutions adopted to date as a practical way forward.

Greece welcomes the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2014/144) and we too express our concern pertaining to the escalating numbers of children that are negatively affected by conflict and post-conflict situations. This is in addition to the military use of, and attacks on, schools as a tool of war. Schools, which formerly represented a place of safety, are now being transformed into places of trepidation and terror. Lamentably, the culture of violence is replacing the culture of learning, thereby reinforcing ideologies of an unsafe world.

In Syria, for example, approximately 1,000 schools were used as detention and torture centres in 2013. It is vital for Member States to protect children and teachers from attacks and to protect children's rights to education by taking steps to end the military use of schools and to hold perpetrators accountable. A strong commitment to the responsibility for dealing effectively with persistent perpetrators of violations against children in armed conflict is encouraged of all States in order to combat impunity. The importance of national protection and accountability mechanisms is therefore essential. Engagement with non-State armed groups for the purposes of ending violations and concluding action plans is also necessary.

It is important for Member States to pursue concrete, time-bound action plans and to commit to action plan implementation through national-level strategies. It is therefore crucial to call upon donors to support national efforts to strengthen capacities for child protection. That includes training and capacity-building for child protection workers and advisers, peacebuilders and peacekeepers, and working together with communities on preventive efforts.

We must also aim to support national institutions and mechanisms that protect civilians in armed conflict.

Furthermore, the monitoring and reporting of violations should be upheld and considered as noteworthy tools to mitigate the ongoing effects of impunity. That should be accompanied by political dialogue, demarches, multilateral cooperation and mainstreaming the topics of children in armed conflict so as to advocate for the protection of children.

In the words of a former child soldier in Sierra Leone, Ishmael Beah, "children have the resilience to outlive their sufferings, if given a chance". Let us work together to give those children a chance for hope and a future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Koncke (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express Uruguay's gratitude to the Permanent Mission of Luxembourg for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict during its presidency of the Security Council. I am also grateful for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and reiterate our full support to her in fulfilling her mandate. We would also like to thank the Executive Director of UNICEF, whose joint work with Ms. Zerrougui is of the greatest significance in achieving the goal of stopping child recruitment by security forces and armed groups by 2016.

Allow me to highlight the value of the substantive reports prepared by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, which allow us to appreciate the achievements made and challenges to be addressed in order to overcome the serious problems that this sensitive issue presents for the international community. We also thank Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for his courageous first-hand testimony.

The impact of armed conflict on children is alarming and horrifying, as is the recognition of the increase in serious violations of the rights of children despite the many efforts being made to limit and ultimately put an end to such acts. We therefore call on the Security Council to adopt specific measures to strengthen the children and armed conflict mandate.

An alarming and growing number of children are being killed, subjected to sexual violence and rape, and recruited into armies and armed groups. In addition, unacceptable attacks on schools and their deliberate use for military purposes endanger children's lives and security, as well as their right to education. The task before us of preventing such violations and abuses of children's rights and establishing effective protection for children from the atrocities of war is an arduous one, especially as most children involved in armed conflict are being recruited by States themselves.

The subject we are considering today is an item on the agenda of the General Assembly, where every year my country plays as active a role as possible to increase the share of responsibilty shouldered by that United Nations organ, which is of universal membership, on a subject that is part of its mandate and of grave concern to all of us.

Nevertheless, Uruguay should like to highlight the role the Security Council has been playing through the adoption of its many resolutions aimed at establishing and implementing specific measures to end the illegal recruitment and exploitation of children in armed conflict. We reiterate our gratitude in this regard, in the understanding that the Council's intervention is of vital importance to achieving the objective of stopping such recruitment by 2016 and preventing further violations of the fundamental rights of children. Thanks to the action plans resulting from the Council's mandate on this subject, over the past 20 years thousands of children have been freed from a form of exploitation that is a violation of human dignity.

Resolution 2143 (2014), adopted by the Security Council today, on the rights of the child is of special importance. In particular, the Council reiterates its deep concern over the lack of progress in situations of armed conflict and the fact that, in such conflicts, parties continue to violate with impunity the provisions of international law that protect children by condemning their recruitment by armies and armed groups. The Council has stressed that concern in the resolution by calling on the parties involved in armed conflict and armed groups to respect the norms of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols, and to refrain from the use of schools for military purposes. Uruguay believes that this is essential when it comes to respecting the rights of the child, as established in various instruments, in particular article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges States to respect children's right to education.

We should also recognize the contribution made by the International Criminal Court in various situations, in particular by designating as war crimes acts that involve sexual violence against children, the recruitment of children under 15 years of age, or their use as active participants in armed conflicts. We also recognize the work of other international courts that have also taken on the issue of the protection of children in their jurisdictions. We appreciate the fact that the resolution expressly recognizes the work of the International Criminal Court and calls on all States to put an end to impunity for cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other abhorrent crimes against children.

Our delegation affirms Uruguay's belief in the fundamental need to strengthen the fight against impunity for all of those responsible for grave violations of children's rights. We therefore encourage the Security Council to report such cases to the International Criminal Court. We also believe that cooperation with national and international courts is a necessary and fundamental step in ensuring effective judgments in such situations.

Another relevant issue is the attention to be accorded to the effective reintegration of children who are linked to armed groups and those who have suffered other severe violations of human rights, in particular in cases involving sexual exploitation or abuse. I stress the crucial importance of effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes to the well-being of all children affected by armed conflict. Such programmes should necessarily enjoy the human and financial resources they require and the support of the communities to which they belong in order to ensure the successful and sustainable reintegration of those children into society.

To conclude, my delegation believes that the social reintegration of children implicitly involves recognizing situations in which children are accused of crimes committed during their association with armed forces or groups. In such situations, children need to be considered first and foremost as victims, and as such treated in accordance with international law within the context of a legal system that enables their full social rehabilitation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I would like to thank the presidency of Luxembourg for organizing this important debate and Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for sharing his touching story with us. We also welcome the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014) on children and armed conflict, which includes very important elements with regard to the development and implementation of the framework on children and armed conflict.

The legal and normative framework regarding children and armed conflict has developed considerably over the past 15 years, leading to significant improvements on the ground. There has been increased momentum, especially with regard to the prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers, thanks to important campaigns such as "Children, not soldiers".

On the other hand, the expansion of the framework of children and armed conflict beyond child soldiers to include the six grave violations has highlighted the other challenges currently faced. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/245) stresses that tens of thousands of children continue to be recruited, killed or maimed, sexually abused or deprived of their right to education and health care, among other abuses. We are particularly concerned about the widespread and deliberate attacks against schools, educational personnel and students, as well as the use of schools for military purposes, including as barracks, fighting positions, detention centres, interrogation or torture sites, and weapons depots.

Sadly, we are witnessing a heartbreaking example of how children are affected by armed conflict right across our border with Syria. There are recent depictions of the grave crimes committed against the children of Syria in the report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, released on 12 February, as well as the Secretary-General's May 2013 report on children and armed conflict. According to UNICEF statistics, over 4 million Syrian children are in need of assistance and 3 million are internally displaced; 94,362 have lost their parents due to the conflict; at least 5,000 out of 22,000 schools have been partially or totally damaged, and a further 1,000 have been used to shelter internally displaced persons; and there are over 60,000 Syrian students at the camps in Turkey.

A strong display of political will, unity and joint action on the part of the international community would be the most important tool for child protection. United Nations and the other missions can be crucial sources of trustworthy information and provide monitoring and reporting functions, which could lead to awareness-raising, as well as better planning, protection and response. Therefore, it is crucial to mainstream principles related to children and armed conflict into peacekeeping mandates and the training programmes of their personnel. Moreover, ensuring humanitarian access, as well as full access to justice by children, should be prioritized in areas of conflict.

New conflicts erupting around the globe, as well as the evolving character of war and conflict, give rise to new threats and challenges in relation to children and armed conflict. The increased number and scope of conflicts heightens the importance of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations, regional countries and organizations, troop-contributing countries and other relevant actors that are active in crisis areas. Regional and subregional organizations can especially contribute to the protection of civilians and child protection on a number of issues, ranging from reporting, information-sharing and analysis to mediation and a possible presence in the field, especially during armed conflict. Towards that end, those organizations, which are increasingly involved in conflict prevention, mediation and peace support, should further mainstream child protection issues in their efforts.

While focusing on new threats and challenges, we must not lose sight of the initial goal of mobilizing efforts to end the recruitment and use of children by armed groups. The Security Council must continue to apply pressure on persistent perpetrators, including through sanctions if necessary. Preventive measures, such as the establishment of legal frameworks and age-verification mechanisms, especially birth registration, are of particular importance. Justice and security sector reform processes must be supported to foster investigative and prosecution capacities, as well as national accountability mechanisms. On the other hand, international organizations and non-governmental organizations should refrain from drawing up any kind of documents, including deeds of commitment, with terrorist organizations, which can easily abuse that situation to legitimize their existence and acts.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that children and armed conflict is a development issue as well. Sustainable development is dependent upon healthy, educated and socially integrated youth in every society. As such, the sustained denial of the right to health, education and a safe and secure environment for children results in lost generations, endangering the future of entire societies and cultures. We appreciate the work done by UNICEF and its partners in that respect, especially with regard to the critical efforts made to minimize the impact of the crisis on children, including in the life-saving areas of health, nutrition, immunization, water and sanitation, as well as investments in the future of children through education and child protection.

In conclusion, I would like to voice our strong readiness to extend our full support to international and regional efforts related to child protection and child soldiers. I would particularly like to commend the valuable efforts of the United Nations, and express our heartfelt gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui and her hard-working team.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Luxemburg for its leadership on this issue and for organizing this important debate. Also, please allow me to commend the work of both Special Representative Leila Zerrougui and UNICEF in promoting and protecting the rights of children affected by armed conflict.

Since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), thousands of children have been killed in conflicts and many more have been left disabled, homeless or separated from their parents. The civil war in Syria stands out for its catastrophic scope and human cost. Over 10,000 children have been killed and 3 million children are in need of humanitarian assistance. Let me underline the importance of the "No lost generation" initiative and other efforts to alleviate some of the suffering of Syrian children and offer them a future.

In view of the continued violence against children in conflict and the use of child soldiers in conflict, it is clear that more should be done by the international community. Let me address three issues: prevention, protection and prosecution.

First of all, we must strengthen the prevention of conflicts and the prevention of the use of child soldiers in conflict. The further focusing of our common international norms in resolution 2143 (2014), adopted today, is of great importance to that effect. The establishment of legal frameworks, strengthening governance and rule of law in countries, age verification in recruitment mechanisms and raising public awareness are some examples of concrete action. We therefore welcome the important report published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack recently and the launch of the "Children, not soldiers" campaign.

The full implementation of the action plans by parties in conflict, as listed in the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/245), is called for. It is clear that children belong in schools, not in armies, as the Secretary-General so rightfully mentioned this morning.

Secondly, together we should strengthen the protection of children in conflict. In that regard, the Netherlands is especially alarmed by widespread and deliberate attacks against schools, teachers and students as a tool of war. Nearly 50 million children and young people in conflict zones face enormous barriers to education every day, keeping them out of school and preventing them from reaching their true potential. That will affect the potential for growth and development of the country as a whole, long after peace agreements have been signed.

My Government is also alarmed by the rise in the use of school buildings for military purposes, including as barracks, fighting positions, detention centres, interrogation or torture sites, and weapons depots. We strongly oppose such practices and, in line with resolution 1998 (2011), urge everyone to take steps both within their own legislation and military policies and doctrine, as well as internationally, to end the military use of schools and protect children's rights to safety and education. Schools, as we know, are protected under international humanitarian law. Nevertheless, as Valerie Amos has told us, in Syria they are used for military purposes. That must stop.

My third point is if prevention and protection have not had sufficient results, prosecution and fighting impunity are called for. If crimes against children do occur, it is first and foremost the State concerned that should ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. But if a State is unwilling or unable to do so, the International Criminal Court (ICC) should step in and investigate and prosecute violations and abuses against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction. The verdict of the ICC against Thomas Lubanga for recruiting and using child soldiers in hostilities was important in that context. For children who were the victims of armed conflict, it is important to see that justice is done, because impunity is not only denial of justice — it is denial of the truth. Fighting impunity is therefore a prerequisite for durable conflict resolution and stable and peaceful societies, which we all want for our children.

In conclusion, the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations states: "We the peoples of the United Nations [are] determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Of course, that phrase is about our children and their children. Let us engage in that task, knowing that our children are the promise for a more peaceful future. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to be a partner in that endeavour for peace, justice and development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): At the outset, please allow me to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, not only for organizing today's open debate, but also for Luxembourg's active chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. I would also like to recognize and thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and her Office for their work in keeping this significant issue at the top of our agenda, and I would add, also very present in the public discourse.

Germany aligns itself with the statement made earlier today by the observer of the European Union.

The Council's instruments on children and armed conflict are among the most developed and innovative mechanisms at our disposal in the United Nations. They demonstrate the potential of multilateral cooperation and renew our faith in the effectiveness of the Security Council on thematic issues. In that regard, we very much welcome the adoption today of resolution 2143 (2014). It is another important building block in forming a solid framework for the protection of children in armed conflict. We especially welcome the focus on the importance of protecting schools and hospitals in armed conflict, which builds on resolution 1998 (2011), adopted during the German presidency of the Security Council in 2011.

Groups that recruit and use children in armed conflict violate the most basic principles of international law, irrespective of whether they are State or non-State actors. They violate the promise that each generation makes to the next that the world should be left as a more secure and more prosperous place for those who succeed us. I would like to make the following three points.

First, we must resolutely support the "Children, not soldiers" campaign of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, which was launched just yesterday. Ending the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016 is a realistic goal. We need to seize upon the existing political will of the concerned Governments to realize that objective. Germany stands ready to support those Governments that have committed themselves.

Secondly, Germany strongly advocates the continued and comprehensive inclusion of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding missions and special political missions. We wholeheartedly support the commitment that the Council has made in the resolution adopted today. In that regard, the Council should remain in close contact with such child protection advisers in order to provide greater clarity on the training and resources needed for the protection of children in each situation.

Thirdly, the international community must seek innovative solutions on how armed non-State actors can be compelled to cease the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. It is important that the Special Representative also be allowed to reach out to non-State actors in order to set up action plans to end violence against children in armed conflict. Such action plans have proven a very effective tool to ensure the protection of and a better life for, children in conflict situations.

We have established a system which is good and effective. We should thus gather all our efforts to ensure that all provisions for the protection of children in armed conflict are implemented fully.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): At the outset, let me extend my delegation's appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict, and for the helpful concept note (S/2014/144, annex). I also wish to thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their valuable briefings.

Our appreciation also goes to Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for being willing to share his heartfelt experience as a former child combatant. Thirteen years ago in this very Chamber (see S/PV.4422), Alhaji Babah Sawaneh narrated how, at the tender age of 14, he was trained by rebels to shoot, burn down houses and kill innocent people. Since then, there has been notable international progress on the protection and promotion of children's rights in conflicts. Yet too many children continue to tragically become fodder in the various war zones and hostility-affected regions.

Indonesia welcomes the adoption today of resolution 2143 (2014) , which it is hoped will garner greater concrete support for the efforts to safeguard children in armed conflicts. Indonesia appreciates the work of the Special Representative, along with other relevant United Nations entities, on protecting children. We also take note of the collaboration between her Office and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, particularly regarding the mainstreaming of children's rights issues into important mechanisms, such as the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review and the treaty bodies. In addition, Indonesia would like to make the following observations.

First, we must all contribute to further strengthening the global normative framework within and outside the United Nations system on the protection of children in conflict. It must always be underscored that there will be neither any tolerance for recruiting child soldiers nor any lax measures to safeguard children and their rights in conflicts. While that should be clear in United Nations peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, it is crucial that there also be dialogue and cooperation with national authorities on those issues. Effective child protection will be possible when concerned Governments and local authorities are closely engaged with and involved in protection efforts. We therefore encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to step up her efforts in working closely with the relevant national Governments to enhance mutual trust and confidence.

Secondly, while the United Nations is uniquely placed to advance child protection in conflicts normatively and operationally, it should seek greater partnerships with the wide array of relevant regional organizations and civil society groups to enhance outcomes, especially because a number of ongoing conflicts have a regional dimension. We are pleased that the Special Representative places priority on partnering with regional and subregional organizations, which will bolster the United Nations agenda on children and armed conflict.

Thirdly, the various United Nations child protection actors, including the Blue Helmets, must be adequately resourced and supported in carrying out protection of children in the field. While United Nations personnel should be properly equipped and trained in child protection, they should also work closely with the concerned national actors to increase their sensitivity and capacity in that imperative. In that regard, we would also highlight the potential enabling of the needed capabilities for child protection through the ongoing United Nations Civilian Capacities Initiative.

Standing resolutely, we must all ensure that international human rights and humanitarian laws for the protection of children are not perceived as a challenge. At home, Indonesia is grateful that our children have the opportunity to live without fear and to grow and develop physically, mentally and socially. To that end, we have enforced measures to ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of children through various national laws, targeted strategies and infrastructure.

Indonesia underlines the need to have greater international support for child victims, whether for former under-age combatants or those affected by violence or displacement. We emphasize greater measures for meeting children's physical, educational, health and psychological needs, which may persist for a long time. We stress the role of family and community in creating a welcoming and enabling environment for former child soldiers, along with other effective long-term measures that help them to become normal and productive members of society.

Also, as a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, Indonesia is committed, including through its national peacekeeping centre, to improving the training and capacity of its peacekeepers on this subject.

In closing, I would submit that the most important step in protecting children's rights is preventing conflict itself. It is essential to build capacities that can assist Governments in resolving challenges non-violently. A culture of peace based on the principles of tolerance, rights, responsibilities, reconciliation and coexistence needs to be promoted intensively. Indonesia, in its contributions at the various regional and multilateral organizations, including the different United Nations forums, will continue to give high priority to the safeguarding of children in conflicts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): Slovakia welcomes and highly appreciates the dedication and tireless effort of Luxembourg in mobilizing efforts to end the abuse of children in war. We salute the presidency for placing this important topic on the Council's agenda. Allow me also to congratulate all organizers and participants for launching the "Children, not soldiers" campaign yesterday.

At the outset, I would like to align myself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union, and also to make a few remarks on behalf of Slovakia.

I would like to thank today's briefers for their presentations. In particular, I wish to accentuate the tireless efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, to work for the benefit of children in conflict-affected areas. We fully support the initiative launched by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict towards ending the recruitment of children in Government forces by 2016.

Slovakia has noted with satisfaction an increase in the attention directed to child protection issues when setting up or renewing certain mandates of United Nations missions. Nevertheless, it is only a first step. The prerequisites of improved child protection, as stated in mission mandates, have to be fully implemented in the field. We commend Luxembourg, as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, for being proactive in ensuring that language on children and armed conflict has been retained and expanded wherever possible in country-specific resolutions. Slovakia sponsored resolution 2143 (2014). At the same time, without the additional effort of all Member States, the Working Group risks losing its momentum, credibility and maybe its relevance.

Just a few weeks ago, the Security Council held an open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (see S/PV.7109). During the debate, I stated that the protection of peace and the prevention of war comprise one of the most important missions of the United Nations, and that in cases where we fail to prevent war or conflict, we must combine efforts, abilities, means and resources to protect those most vulnerable: women, children, elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

A stolen childhood cannot be restored in a lifetime. Armed conflict and violence pose considerable and serious risks to the well-being and welfare of children. Abuse suffered in time of war is the worst form of violation of children's rights. Not only do children suffer from the direct consequences of war and armed violence; they are also affected by displacement, loss of relatives and the trauma associated with witnessing acts of violence. Recovery after having experienced a particularly difficult or challenging situation is always long-term, with a possibility of failure. It requires adequate health care, the involvement of parents and society, education and complex attention in dealing with physical and mainly mental trauma.

Slovakia remains gravely concerned about the continuing practice of child soldier recruitment. The number of child soldiers remains alarming and their personal stories are utterly disturbing. The international community must step up efforts both in rescuing children already recruited as soldiers and in developing solid preventive measures to help to discourage, suppress and, ultimately, totally eliminate that distressing phenomenon. There are two key areas in particular to address: poverty and education.

We call on all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to adopt all necessary domestic measures towards its full and effective implementation.

As I stated earlier, access to education both during and after conflict is a key factor in terms of preventing violations of children's rights. Slovakia urges all States, the international community and United Nations institutions to address the matter of education as a priority when adopting policies and programmes with an impact on children and their rights. By providing children with adequate education, we can reduce the risk of their being subjected to abuse.

Slovakia condemns the use of schools for military purposes. The study *Education under attack 2014*, published in February, identifies 70 countries where attacks occurred between 2009 and 2013. In 30 cases, there was a pattern of deliberate attacks. Armed non-State groups and national military and security forces alike have attacked education to advance their own interests. In 24 out of the 30 countries profiled in the study, warring parties took over schools in whole or in part, using them as bases, barracks, firing positions and weapons caches. Buildings that should have provided safe spaces for learning became battlefields when their use for military purposes made them targets for attack. Those figures are extremely alarming.

Early focus on restoring functioning schools and returning young people to classes can represent peace dividends and foster support for peace. Education systems need to collaborate on health, education, safety and security in the schools. Landmine awareness, psycho-social support and reconstruction of education institutions must be aligned with social and economic development planning and public sector and labour market reform.

Slovakia recognizes its share of responsibility in helping children to gain access to education and health care in conflict and post-conflict areas. That is reflected in our development assistance programmes. More than €6 million have been allocated to date for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Slovak research and education institutions in the field of health care and education.

As far as prevention is concerned, those efforts will not be entirely successful without addressing the root causes of conflict, as well as its enabling and facilitating factors. Credible and in-depth security sector reform has been shown to play a crucial and decisive role in reducing or even eliminating conditions that can facilitate the outbreak of conflict, as well as the sustainability of peace in the longer term.

In that context, we reiterate the need to implement vetting mechanisms to ensure that those who have committed crimes against children are not included in army ranks, that the necessary attention is paid to the training of military personnel, including peacekeepers, and that mechanisms to prevent underage recruitment are put in place. If security sector reform could create conditions that would help reintegrate or save even one single child from the horrors of conflict and war, it must become an imperative for each one of us to undertake.

Children need pens and books, not guns and boots. In concluding, I want to stress that the protection of children and their rights, well-being and welfare in any place on the Earth is the moral obligation of each and every citizen of each and every State. We must not abandon those who are the most vulnerable, innocent and defenceless. The international community, States, civil society, humanitarian agencies and NGOs all have the duty and the responsibility to use all means necessary to protect children from suffering.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you, Madam, on your accession to the presidency of the Council and to thank you for convening this important meeting to promote the implementation of the Council's agenda in ensuring the protection of children affected by armed conflict. I am also pleased to welcome His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, and thank him for his participation this morning. I would be remiss not to thank the Secretary-General; Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF; and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their valuable statements this morning.

We continue to face many challenges, including grave violations against children. Since children are the most vulnerable group in societes, and given the continued suffering inflicted upon them in complex and diverse armed conflicts and the non-compliance of parties to conflicts with international humanitarian law, we look to the Security Council to further consider this issue and take more effective measures to protect children from violations. In this regard, we commend the concept paper on the subject submitted by the President today (S/2014/144, annex). While we reaffirm our commitment to the frameworks adopted by the United Nations in this respect, we believe that attention should not be limited to the conceptual level. Rather, the recommendations of the Secretary-General and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict must be applied to the individual cases considered by the Council.

The international community is determined to protect children in times of war and peace alike. The need for the international community to give priority to this issue is underscored by more than 25 articles of the Geneva Conventions and its two additional protocols that refer to children specifically, as well as the provisions of the Convention of the Rights of the Child as universally ratified.

Palestinian children are suffering from injustice because of ongoing Israeli violations against the Palestinian people. As indicated by the Secretary-General in his latest report on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245), in one year alone 50 Palestinian children were killed and more than 665 injured by Israeli forces. Palestinian children, including minors, are subject to arbitrary arrest by the Israeli authorities on the pretext of being a security threat. According to the Secretary-General, more than 194 children were arrested by Israeli authorities. It is also alarming that a large number of attacks were made on schools and educational institutions in the Palestinian occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, where attacks on 321 schools were reported, representing a large proportion of schools in the Palestinian occupied territories.

The Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2014/31) describes horrendous situations, including grave violations against children in particular. The Syrian regime is primarily responsible for the tragic outcomes of its policies of oppression and use of force against the the Syrian people who rose up peacefully to demand their legitimate rights. The use of excessive and arbitrary military force by the regime's forces and militia have killed and maimed countless numbers of children, with long-term direct and indirect impacts, such as psychological effects.

The regime's security and military forces do not spare children from arrest, arbitrary detention, ill treatment and fatal torture. The violations perpertrated by the regime include the use of children as human shields, sexual and physical violence, and massacres of civilians, including babies. Children, who are especially vulnerable to hunger and disease, are obviously the main victims of the regime's policy of starving Syrian towns and villages. They are also largely affected by the massive destruction inflicted upon the health-care sector in Syria. It is alarming, that as a result of the crisis, polio has re-emerged in Syria.

In addition to all this, it is painful to consider that an entire generation of Syrian children may be lost because the lack of access to education, as indicated in a recent UNICEF report. More than 3,000 schools have been destroyed and more than 1,000 used as shelters. We are very concerned about the recurring attacks on schools and their use as military barracks, operations bases and detention centres. This is not only a violation of the civilian nature of such institutions, but it also endangers children and deprives them of their fundamental right to education, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report as well as in those of other organizations, such as the latest report on attacks on education issued by the Global Alliance to Protect Education from Attacks. In that connection, we commend the efforts of the Global Alliance to formulate guidelines aimed at protecting schools and universities from military use.

In conclusion, we are here to day to re-emphasize the importance of efforts to prevent the recruitment of children and promote their rehabilitation. We would like to reaffirm that it is equally important to involve United Nations peacekeeping operations with a mandate for the protection of children in armed conflicts and advisers thereof. We reiterate the importance of paying sufficient attention to strengthening accountability for violations against children, combatting impunity for perpetrators, hold them accountable rapidly and effectively, and taking targeted measures against persistent violators.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): I will deliver a shortened version of my statement; the longer version can go to the website.

Luxembourg's presidency for today's debate is very fitting, given its tireless work on addressing the plight of children engaged in armed conflict. We thank Special Representative Zerrougui, Executive Director Lake and Under-Secretary-General Ladsous for their briefings, and above all we commend Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, whose address provided insights rarely heard by the Council and was powerful testimony to the fundamental importance of the issue.

The abuse of children in armed conflict is regarded as abhorrent by the vast majority of United Nations Member States, and against that background New Zealand welcomes the consensus behind today's resolution 2143 (2014) as a proper reflection of the views of the wider United Nations membership. What is required now is to further strengthen the political will and leadership of the Council. We must continue to reinforce the architecture on children and armed conflict, not least by adopting new initiatives and innovating in order to ensure effective follow-up and greater accountability. Today's debate provides a catalyst for new ideas, in the context of which we commend Ms. Zerrougui and her partners on their ambitious launch of the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, which New Zealand supports.

The Secretary-General's recent report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2014/31) presents, in the starkest terms, the deplorable costs in young lives and lost futures exacted by that awful conflict. It is a reminder of the real cost of failure to act, and should galvanize the Council to redouble its efforts regarding Syria. The Council's recent resolution 2139 (2014) was, among other things, a much-needed step towards addressing the humanitarian situation facing children in Syria, particularly as a consequence of attacks on schools and children's arbitrary detention.

Despite commendable progress in some areas of the children and armed conflict agenda, serious problems remain in many places. We commend the Council for recognizing the need for innovative, practical solutions. But more innovation is required, and that should be regarded as an urgent task. For example, the number of persistent perpetrators is of particular concern. New Zealand suggests that the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict focus on and give even greater prominence to such perpetrators. In addition to the information already provided in the annex, the report should also detail the number of years that each perpetrator has appeared on the list. That would highlight the worst of the persistent perpetrators. The Council could also incentivize progress through, for example, periodic briefings of the wider United Nations membership in a special open session of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which could highlight positive progress on a country basis and provide an opportunity to discuss lessons learned for use elsewhere.

The challenge of reducing and eliminating the abuse of children in armed conflict is made all the more difficult by the fact that the large majority of violators are non-State actors. Progress cannot be made unless we develop techniques for influencing such groups. We also call on the Council to give greater consideration to providing better support for the Special Representative, United Nations agencies and Member States to enhance their ability to engage with non-State actors.

The concept note for today's debate touches on one other aspect, on which I would like to focus: attacks on and the military use of schools. It has been referred to by many of those who have made statements. Education provides the foundation on which the next generation is built. New Zealand welcomes the Council's expression of concern about attacks on and the miltary use of schools but such violation continues. More must be done in response. The draft Lucens guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict deserve very serious consideration. They involve a practical and voluntary approach based on existing international humanitarian law and provide a resource for use by States to improve their own military policy and doctrines and to assist others to do likewise. Those ideas must, of course, exist within a much wider framework of initiatives.

New Zealand grieves that children are still forced to see things that no child should see and to do things that no child should ever do. We again place on record our commitment to the urgent cause of protecting children from armed conflict and from the scourge of war and to maintaining the gains that we have already made. Above all, New Zealand is committed to achieving even better outcomes for children who are, through no choice of their own, deprived of their childhood by being forced into armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Like my colleague who preceded me, I, too, will read a shortened version of my text. I refer participants to the full written statement. However, allow me begin by thanking you, Madam President, in particular for holding this debate. We especially appreciate its open format, which allows all Member States to publically reaffirm their commitment to the protection of children in situations of armed conflict and to make recommendations to the Security Council.

Like preceding speakers, we highly value the very important work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and support the joint campaign to end the recruitment and use of children by government security forces in conflict by 2016, launched yesterday by the Special Representative together with UNICEF.

Despite the repeated calls of the international community to put an end to grave violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, a number of parties to armed conflict still recruit or use children. The list established by the Secretary-General contains more than 50 perpetrators, 46 of which are armed non-State actors. The representative of New Zealand also referred to that fact. Despite the praiseworthy efforts of the Special Representative to engage with a number of those non-State actors to end grave violations against children, the commitments from armed non-State actors remain very limited and a number of challenges continue for the conclusion of action plans with those groups, namely, because of their ephemeral nature, Government opposition or the difficulty in getting in contact with them.

In that regard, Switzerland supports a project on improving accountability for children in situations of armed conflict, which is being implemented by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination and the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. The project will, in particular, focus on facilitating information exchange and dialogue between armed non-State actors, the United Nations and civil society as a step towards increased implementation of action plans with non-State actors that are still committing violations against children.

Furthermore, we will also continue to support the non-governmental organization Geneva Call, which has access to armed non-State actors and engages them to sign deeds of commitments to prevent and put a ban on the recruitment and use of children in hostilities. Geneva Call's approach is complementary to the work undertaken by the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

Training and capacity-building for the personnel responsible for child protection are of the utmost importance. The pre-deployment training in child protection for peacekeepers is essential. Police officers, military personnel and civilians need specialized training on child protection. Switzerland will financially support the mainstreaming of the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict within United Nations peacekeeping operations. Also, we are of the view that Government armed forces listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict should be prohibited from participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations until they have adopted and fully implemented action plans to end violations against children.

Finally, Switzerland encourages States that have not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We thank you, Madam President, for organizing this debate and for steering the strong, yet pragmatic resolution 2143 (2014) on children and armed conflict.

The testimony of Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, the former child soldier, this morning has touched our hearts. We appreciate the valuable briefings given by the Secretary-General, his Special Representative, Ms. Lelia Zerrougui, and UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake.

Children are our most valuable asset. They need to be protected and nurtured through better education, proper nourishment and moral guidance. The dictum of the Charter of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war cannot be realized without making a continued investment in the future of our children. All cultures foster love and affection for children.

Yet we find millions of children trapped in wars and conflicts around the world. As noted in the concept paper (S/2014/144, annex), tens of thousands of children continue to be recruited, killed or maimed, sexually abused or deprived of their right to education and health care when schools or hospitals are attacked. In situations of armed conflict, children are often coerced into taking part in active hostilities. Pushing children into combat situations is inhuman. As a child soldier, a child becomes both the subject and object of crimes. The scourge can and must be stopped.

With the Council's determined efforts over the past 15 years, significant progress has been made to reduce the number of child soldiers. Comprehensive norms and standards have been developed. Thousands of children have been demobilized, rehabilitated and reintegrated into societies but the task has not been accomplished. We should all support the Special Representative's "Children, not soldiers" campaign by creating a greater awareness through media campaigns about the recruitment of children as soldiers, by conducting dialogue with the mothers and families of the affected children, by enlisting the endorsement of all parties to conflict to the initiative and by mobilizing resources for capacity-building.

The establishment of legal frameworks, aid verification mechanisms and universal world registration systems prevent child recruitment and reinforce accountability. Investigative and prosecutorial capacity-building helps in combating impunity and punishing perpetrators. Persistent perpetrators must be identified and brought to justice under national judicial systems and, where applicable, through the use of international criminal justice mechanisms.

Education is an enabler and emancipator, and by far the most effective answer to armed conflicts. Attacks on schools endanger students and teachers, destroy premises and deprive children of their right to education. Such attacks, in most cases, are perpetrated by terrorist and other armed groups that do not respect national laws and international norms. In any case, the military use of schools should be strictly prohibited in all circumstances. The international community should therefore strengthen the hands of national Governments in dealing with these groups and protecting seats of education and learning.

Peacekeeping missions can play a vital role in the protection of children in situations of armed conflict; they are often the first line of defence. It is therefore essential that peacekeeping missions receive the necessary training and resources to effectively perform their critical tasks. As the largest contributor of peacekeeping troops, Pakistan welcomes the recommendations in resolution 2143 (2014) on specific operational predeployment and in-mission training of peacekeepers. Pakistan treats this responsibility with the utmost seriousness.

We should continue to encourage the closer involvement of regional and subregional organizations in protecting the rights of children in armed conflicts. The African Union's intercession in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Mali, for instance, has been quite successful. These experiments are worth replicating. Progress on the delisting process depends on the political will of the countries concerned.

We support the mandated reporting and monitoring procedure to protect the rights of children in armed conflicts. We want to strengthen the political consensus around such mandates. For that purpose, the legal parameters of the mandate must be respected. Focus should continue to remain on situations of armed conflict and those threatening international peace and security.

Finally, we call for the cessation of all armed drone strikes as they infringe the rights of children to life, education and development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Nduhuura (Uganda): Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam President, and the delegation of Luxembourg on your leadership of the Security Council this month and on organizing this debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict.

I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui; Executive Director of UNICEF Anthony Lake; and Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous for their useful briefings. We also appreciate the insights provided by Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, from Sierra Leone, based on his own experience as a child soldier.

We often say that children are the future of the world, and indeed they are because they represent humankind's hopes. As the most vulnerable group, children are adversely affected by armed conflict. It is therefore incumbent upon all Member States and parties to conflicts to ensure that children are protected from the harm of armed conflict.

Uganda condemns the recruitment, use and abuse of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law. The psychosocial consequences on the well-being and mental health of the affected children are traumatic. We therefore welcome the attention that Security Council continues to accord to this issue and the progress that is being made, including the adoption of a series of measures to promote the protection of children in armed conflict by the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of work to be done, especially in assisting countries emerging from conflict to give full consideration to the special needs of children as part of their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

The challenge of protecting the rights and well-being of children during conflict and ensuring attention to their educational, health, rehabilitation and nutritional needs in post-conflict periods is daunting. Too frequently, the absence of participation by advocates of youths and children during peace negotiations means that their concerns are often not given the attention they deserve.

We are convinced that addressing the needs of children is not just a matter of fairness, equity or humanitarianism; it is also key to building and maintaining lasting peace. It is therefore crucial to ensure respect for children's rights, hold accountable those responsible for abuses and crimes committed against children in armed conflict, and cater to the needs of affected children in post-conflict situations.

Beyond the impact on peace and stability, there is indeed the human dimension of the tragedy of children caught up in armed conflict. Unfortunately, there have been many instances of violent conflict where children have been used as bearers, cooks, messengers and sex slaves, and others have been involved in combat, taking human lives. Besides child soldiers, all children become victims in one way or another during armed conflicts. They become victims when they are displaced or when their Government cannot ensure adequate funding for schools and health clinics, resulting in very low school participation rates and high infant mortality rates.

No country emerging from war can, without risk, leave its young people on the sidelines without any future, knowing only a culture of violence. Programmes for disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating combatants must therefore take into account the specific needs of children, in particular young girls, who are even more severely affected than boys and whose reintegration is even more difficult. In Uganda, following the end of the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency in 2006, one of the priorities of the Government was reintegration of formerly abducted children into their families and communities.

In conclusion, it is vital that we constantly improve strategies to make an impact in terms of protection of children in armed conflict. The international community must make sustained efforts to truly change the situation. The United Nations should continue to document its experience and lessons learned in the area of protection of children during peacekeeping operations so that future peacekeeping operations can benefit from that experience.

At the same time, all parties to armed conflicts should strive to meet their obligations under relevant international law and to respect and safeguard the rights of children. In post-conflict situations, the return of children to their families, schools and communities as well as the provision of sufficient resources should be prioritized. Young boys and girls kidnapped or coerced into joining armed groups must be freed to live the rest of their lives without the stigma or trauma of those early years shadowing their future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): At the outset, I would like to highly commend the Luxembourg presidency for convening this important meeting. There can hardly be a topic that calls for greater attention than this one. Our sincere appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their valuable briefings. Special gratitude goes to Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for his personal testimony.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

The reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict are a stark reminder for us of the challenges ahead. We note with appreciation that some progress has been made in the protection and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, especially with regard to the release of children from armed forces and armed groups in several countries. However, we remain gravely concerned and saddened that children in many countries continue to suffer terribly from the physical and emotional wounds that armed conflicts bring upon them.

Croatia fully supports all efforts aimed at the prevention and combating of sexual violence in conflict and at ensuring accountability for crimes committed. Croatia has become one of the global champions of the United Kingdom's initiative entitled Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict and has supported a historic declaration aimed towards worldwide efforts to eradicate that war crime. We look forward to the elaboration of the international protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict, which is of special relevance for children's rights and their protection.

Croatia strictly opposes and is gravely concerned by the use of schools for military purposes, because it puts children in grave danger and negatively affects their right to education. That seriously jeopardizes their chances for the future. We recognize the right to access to education as a fundamental human right. Particular attention is being paid to its protection through Croatia's international assistance and development cooperation to countries in and emerging from conflicts.

Last year, following a children-sensitive approach and supporting girls' education in particular, Croatia funded the construction of a library in Afghanistan used by 5,000 children, and a high school attended by 600 children. Last year we also provided medical treatment in Croatia to a number of Palestinian children suffering from respiratory diseases, thereby contributing to their psychosocial rehabilitation and well-being.

As a country that experienced war horrors that gravely affected children, Croatia fully supports the campaign "Children, not soldiers", which has as its primary aim preventing the recruitment of children by 2016.

The use of child soldiers and their conscription and enlistment into armed units is a war crime. There can be zero tolerance for impunity. This and all other forms of war crimes and crimes against humanity must be prosecuted and brought to justice, primarily before national courts but ultimately, in the absence of capacity of States to do so, before the International Criminal Court (ICC). With the aim of strengthening this important principle of subsidiarity, Croatia fully supports deepening the dialogue between the Security Council and the ICC.

We must all increase the pressure on those who have no heart, no shame and no conscience. Listing violations against children as clear designation criteria for sanctions, and making concerted efforts to sanction responsible individuals is one way to do so.

We should spare no effort to protect those who are the most vulnerable and those unable to protect themselves. Croatia firmly supports the inclusion of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations and the organization of predeployment targeted training for child protection for peacekeepers. It is of paramount importance that all the relevant peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations properly address the impact of conflict on children, especially girls. We also advocate that this aspect be given even greater prominence in the relevant reports submitted to the Security Council.

Croatia ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and calls for its universal ratification. We also consider the Paris Principles and Commitments a useful guide in our common efforts to respond to the plight of children affected by armed conflicts worldwide.

Finally, as one of the sponsors of today's resolution (resolution 2143 (2014)), we highly commend its unanimous adoption.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Montenegro.

Mr. Nikolić (Montenegro): We thank you for organizing this open debate, Madam President, and commend your leadership in preparing the text of the resolution just adopted (resolution 2143 (2014)), which we were happy to sponsor. We also thank today's briefers for their valuable presentations.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like, however, to highlight some points of particular importance to my country.

We were moved by the story of Mr. Alhaji Banah Sawaneh, who was a former child solider in Sierra Leone. His testimony is yet another reminder of the scope of the challenge we face, even today.

Although the Security Council has made significant progress in advancing the children and armed conflict agenda, more action is needed to protect the rights of children in situations of armed conflict and to ensure that perpetrators of grave violations against children are held to account. It is in that context that we welcome and strongly support the campaign "Children, not soldiers", which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of UNICEF unveiled yesterday as a new effort to end the recruitment and use of children in Government forces in conflict by 2016.

Thousands of boys and girls around the world are still being recruited into Government forces and armed opposition groups to serve as combatants, cooks, porters or messengers, or in other roles. Girls, and sometimes boys, are also recruited for sexual purposes. Therefore, we fully echo the words of the Special Representative that the time has come for the world to unite and turn the page, once and for all, on the recruitment and use of children by security forces in conflict.

We expect that the campaign will make a significant difference through its twofold contribution: first, to the full implementation of action plans to end and prevent recruitment and, secondly, to the release of children and their reintegration into civilian life in order to ensure that children released from armed forces or groups are able to become productive members of their societies and are no longer at risk of re-recruitment in future.

It is also essential that the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict continue to best use the tools at its disposal in order to provide appropriate responses to all types of grave violations, including those committed by non-State actors. In that regard, we would like to stress that Member States need to allow access for the United Nations to armed non-State actors for the purpose of ending violations and concluding and implementing action plans.

We share the concern about attacks and the increasing use of schools for military purposes, as it can have a devastating impact on children. It is worrisome that schools can be converted into military targets and that students, teachers and learning facilities can indeed be made vulnerable to attacks and other forms of violence by parties in conflict. We call on all parties to armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education. We also have to ensure that all measures are taken to protect students, teachers, schools and universities from attack and military use.

With respect to United Nations peacekeeping and political missions and the indispensable role they play, Montenegro would like to advocate for a strong child protection component to be incorporated in missions' mandates. That would require peacekeepers, military and security personnel to receive specialized child protection predeployment training.

Montenegro is concerned about the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. We would like to call on all parties to conflicts to refrain from the use of such explosive weapons so as to ensure that civilians, in particular children, are protected against death, injury and psychological harm.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has a key role in fighting impunity. When crimes of an international scale are committed and national judiciaries are unwilling or unable to deal with them, States parties to the Rome Statute should pay due consideration to referring those situations to the ICC. It is also vital that the Security Council, to the extent possible, use the option to refer situations to the ICC.

In conclusion, let me point out that everyone — the international community, regional and subregional organizations and the entire United Nations system — must contribute to our common and noble objective so that no child ever experiences what Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh went through. We owe that to children.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I would like to thank you, Madam President, and your delegation for convening this open debate and thereby showing that your country attaches particular importance to the issue of children in armed conflict.

Allow me to express our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake, and especially to Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, for their excellent briefings today.

Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the adoption of the Security Council's action-oriented resolution 2143 (2014), on children in armed conflict.

I would like to start with some statistics. According to UNICEF, 10 million children were traumatized by war in the past decade. Furthermore, in armed conflict, children are the most vulnerable group in society and are often subjected to rape, sexual violence and abduction. Tens of thousands of children continue to be recruited, killed, maimed or deprived of their rights to education and health care. Poverty and conflict are frequently obstacles, as children barely in their teens are compelled to support hungry families or forced to become child soldiers or comfort wives.

The practice of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict still persists. It is a grave human rights violation. The involvement of children in armed conflict presents serious challenges on the ground for both States in conflict and for the United Nations presence. There are a number of examples that we see in the world today.

We stress the primary role of national Governments in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflicts. We also urge all parties to conflicts to fully comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law with regard to protecting the civilian population as a whole. All countries and groups must place the protection of children in situations of conflict above politics.

Education is increasingly being highlighted as essential to the advancement of society, as well as crucial to opportunity for individuals. Defining education as a fundamental human right is an important start. In spite of that recognition, we are witnessing a growing number of attacks against schools, educational facilities, teachers and pupils. Hundreds of thousands of children all over the world are today suffering from the absence of any opportunity to be appropriately educated. Two out of three children do not attend secondary school. The majority of them become completely lost, and a forgotten generation for good. Such a situation establishes a historical basis for future international peace and security challenges.

Malala Yousafzai, targeted by the Pakistani Taliban for assassination for promoting education for a generation of young men and women, stands out as a symbol for millions who are denied opportunity and access. Therefore, in times of conflict, all steps should be taken to safeguard the right to education. All parties to conflict should safeguard schools as protected areas and zones of peace for boys and girls.

What more can be done, both in practice and definition, by the United Nations and the international community? We reiterate that targeted, gradual and more vigorous measures against groups and individuals who persistently commit grave violations against children should be undertaken.

In order to end impunity for violations against children, Member States must uphold existing international standards and put into practice their obligations through accelerated national legislative reform and systematic implementation and monitoring. Perpetrators should be brought to justice in compliance with international justice mechanisms, criminal courts and tribunals. We are encouraged by the fact that some parties to armed conflict have made progress in releasing child soldiers. In that context, we stress the primary role of national Governments in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict.

With regard to the practice of reintegrating children into communities, domestic and international stakeholders dealing with situations of conflict in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations often face difficulties. To resolve such complex issues, efficient coordination among different actors is needed, including by the host country, host Government, United Nations entities, donors and non-governmental organizations. Special attention should be given to refugees and displaced children, children with disabilities and those who have been subjected to sexual violence. We believe that their participation in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration practices is critical.

In addition, we believe that the cooperation and exchange of information between the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant Sanctions Committees should be improved. We commend the "Children, not soldiers" campaign of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict. Regional and subregional organizations have an important role to play in the promotion and protection of children's rights.

United Nations-mandated institutions, including the Offices of the Special Rapporteurs, UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council, provide regular reviews on the status of, and respect for, human rights within the borders of any United Nations State Member. The protection of children must remain at the top of any review agenda for the sake of our future.

When we talk about the future of child protection, we should also keep in perspective the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development framework. During the discussion in the Open Group on Sustainable Development Goals in February, many countries voiced the issue of conflict and violence prevention and the pursuit of durable peace as one of the starting points or prerequisites of development and sustainable development. Furthermore, education is promoted as one of the most critical priorities among the Millennium Development Goals.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that the Security Council should remain committed to the protection of children in armed conflict, including through determination to ensure the full implementation of, and respect for, its resolutions on the issue. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to contribute to that aim.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I take floor in the Security Council during your presidency, allow me at the outset of my statement, to congratulate you, Madam President, and tp express how pleased I am to see you presiding over the Council during the month of March. My delegation thanks the Security Council and the presidency of Luxembourg for including on its agenda an issue that particularly affects the Democratic Republic of Congo, namely, children and armed conflict. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2013/245) on the issue. My thanks also go to Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and to Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their commitment to the cause of children.

In one of her annual reports, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict writes that thousands of children continue to be killed, maimed or abducted, suffer sexual violence, or are denied access to humanitarian assistance or health care in many countries. In several countries, she continues, they have also been used to commit suicide attacks or to serve as human shields. That description corresponds exactly to the ordeal suffered daily by Congolese children due to the presence of numerous foreign and domestic armed groups that plunder the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Indeed, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country that has suffered for more than a decade of intermittent armed conflicts with the grimmest of consequences, children are among those civilians whose rights are most frequently violated. What is worse, given their immature psychological makeup, they experience great trauma when they are recruited as soldiers. That is the case, for example, when they are forced to kill an adversary in cold blood or a comrade in arms suspected of collaboration, or when forced to burn villages or to stand by helplessly as comrades suffer. All the armed groups operating in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo recruit boys and girls as soldiers, messengers, spies or traffickers or to transport munitions.

Change has been palpable since the defeat of the Mouvement du 23 mars. However, internal displacements from ongoing acts of violence have not completely ceased, given the armed groups that continue to recruit children, subjecting them to forced labour and the extraction of natural resources. These children are also used to grind rocks into gravel in quarries. Once broken down, coltan is used in electronic devices. The high level of radioactivity of such substances explains the frequent respiratory problems, sometimes lethal, suffered by a great number of Congolese children who have been transporting and breaking down coltan.

Those who survive are traumatized by acts of vandalism and barbarism perpetrated by the armed groups that victimize them. They have had to witness, powerlessly, horrible scenes of violence in which their families and friends have been killed before their eyes. Thousands of child victims of violent attacks by armed groups have suffered considerable material and moral damage. I speak on behalf of those children, whose families, generally in a dire economic situation, would have liked concrete measures of redress and reparation to be made for them. From the viewpoint of education, displaced children living in areas of combat have virtually no access to education, which leaves them even more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups.

Given the scope of the phenomenon, and pursuant to the recommendations contained in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, the Congolese authorities have spared no expense in tackling the challenges. In October 2012, my Government and the United Nations signed an action plan with a series of commitments by both parties, aiming to end the recruitment and use of children by Congolese armed forces and security services in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as sexual violence against children.

Progress has been made since the signing of that action plan. Two directives have been issued by the Congolese authorities. The first was issued by the Ministry of National Defence and Veterans Affairs to the Democratic Republic of the Congo Armed Forces, recalling the various commitments made by the Government in the matter and the obligations arising therefrom. The second was issued by the general administrator of the Congolese National Intelligence Agency. It gives the United Nations task force and child-protection agencies access to intelligence staff, documents, sites and installations, and authorizes the release of all children associated with armed groups into the care of child-protection agencies.

Moreover, two coordination mechanisms have been created to follow up the implementation of the action plan. Results have been encouraging. According to statistics, 2,494 children were removed from armed groups and forces in June 2013, while 2,824 children, of whom 365 were girls, were placed in the care of the transitional support structure. Those numbers fell through 31 December 2013 and perhaps even more by today.

Among the wide-ranging actions undertaken by the Government to address the phenomenon of sexual violence, I note the law of 20 July 2006. Compared to the earlier criminal code of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the law brings meaningful change, including by raising the age limit for those considered to be victims of sexual violence from 14 to 18 years old. Practices that were formerly considered to be lesser crimes — including forced marriage, forced prostitution or the exploitation of children, sexual slavery, bestiality and genital mutilation — are now punished more severely. Moreover, the new law on sexual violence, includes not only those crimes but also 16 additional crimes under the principle of international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is resolved to pursue its campaign to eradicate this phenomenon. Along those lines, my delegation takes this opportunity to call upon the foreign and domestic armed groups still active in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to respond positively to the invitation of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese armed forces to lay down their arms and to surrender to Congolese authorities so that they can be repatriated to their countries, in the case of foreigners, or inscribed in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, in the case of Congolese nationals.

My delegation welcomes the commitment of the Security Council to working to protect children against grave violations committed during armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, my delegation is pleased to take part in this debate under your presidency, which confirms your commitment and ongoing efforts on this issue. I congratulate you for the adoption this morning of resolution 2143 (2014). I also would like to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Anthony Lake and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their statements.

Since 1999, the issue of the involvement of children in armed conflict has enjoyed the special attention of the Security Council. Despite the progress made, the international community continues to face major challenges related to the ongoing recruitment of children by certain parties to armed conflict, in violation of the most basic elements of human rights and international humanitarian law, including refugee law. The focus on women, boys and girls as vulnerable groups in times of armed conflict must remain at the very centre of the Council's concerns with a view to eliminating the worst forms of violence and exploitation against those groups, promote their rights and ensure respect for their human dignity.

The adoption by the Council of resolution 1612 (2005) on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict facilitated the establishment of a mechanism to monitor and report on grave violations committed against child soldiers. That mechanism has broadly contributed to collecting reliable information supporting the implementation of national action plans for the protection of children in armed conflict.

Other resolutions — including 1882 (2009) on sexual violence and children, 1998 (2011) on attacks against schools and hospitals, and 2068 (2012) on criminal liability for persistent perpetrators — are among those initiatives aimed at bolstering existing legal frameworks in terms of child protection. Through its ongoing commitment, the Security Council has also clearly highlighted the fact that the fight against the phenomenon is not only a moral and humanitarian imperative, but also a pillar of international peace and security.

Nevertheless, the international normative framework adopted to ensure the best possible protection of children in armed conflict, and the United Nations mechanisms established in that area, cannot guarantee the necessary protection without the essential political involvement of Member States to put an end to the scourge.

The stubborn nature of the recruitment of child soldiers is closely related to the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, particularly by organized crime networks and due to weak border control cooperation and difficulties in implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Within the framework of its efforts, the Council should adopt a holistic approach to address the phenomenon of child recruitment in its military, security and social and humanitarian dimensions.

My delegation shares the view that the fight against child recruitment of soldiers includes conflict prevention while addressing such root causes as poverty, exclusion and social inequalities. In the framework of post-conflict situations, we must strive to ensure national reconciliation, respect for the rule of law and democracy, and conditions conducive to sustainable development.

National child protection strategies continue to depend on measures to build Government capacities and on the availability of material, financial and human resources to ensure the sustainablility of initiatives established under national action plans. They also require attention to international development indicators in the establishment of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes aimed at child victims of recruitment through national training and job-creation projects to offer young people improved prospects through re-education and training. In that respect, my delegation welcomes the growing number of action plans signed or in negotiation that reflect the merits of dialogue and cooperation. Those efforts should involve not only public authorities, but also non-governmental organizations, national human rights entities and civil society.

The Kingdom of Morocco commends the "Children, not soldiers" campaign launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF, aimed at ending the recruitment of children in armed conflict by 2016 and supporting national initiatives in that area. Similarly, we welcome measures taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to strengthen the education and training of military personnel involved in peacekeeping operations so as to enable them to protect children in situations of armed conflict.

My delegation hopes that the guidelines jointly set forth in 2009 by the DPKO and the Department of Field Support will help to guide activities of the United Nations system related to children in armed conflict and to support the mandates of child protection advisers in peacetime. The recruitment of children in armed conflict is a crime that must be denounced, condemned and punished. The efforts of the international community to end it will require specific, targeted, practical actions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): I thank you, Madam President, for giving me this opportunity to speak before the Security Council. The Philippines notes the adoption today of resolution 2143 (2014) and the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the statement of the Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

My Government reaffirms its firm and demonstrated resolve to protect our children and their rights wherever they may be or in whatever circumstances they are in. My Government's actions on the matter speak volumes about our seriousness. Our commitment cannot be questioned. My Government has been working steadfastly to institute meaningful and significant additional measures or specific actions to ensure that the framework for the protection of our children in any circumstances, including challenging situations, remains robust. That includes the signing of Executive Order No. 138, which created a monitoring, reporting and response system for grave child rights violations in all possible venues that a Filipino child may be in, including situations that may be characterized as armed conflict.

My Government and our negotiators from both sides are working very hard in forging the agreement that will ensure a durable solution in southern Mindanao. My President went to Malaysia a few days ago to thank the Malaysian Government for hosting many of the negotiations on a very comprehensive agreement for a lasting solution in southern Mindanao.

Members should note that Typhoon Haiyan hit the central Philippines in the central region of the Visayas. Our negotiators were even very careful in their choice of words. The Council is very familiar with the nature, sensibilities and complexities of negotiations — anywhere and everywhere. And yet one still hears general sweeping references in statements or terms regarding the Philippines that cause one to wonder if they are at all reflective of a geographical knowledge of my country or helpful to national efforts.

The Philippine Government continues to work closely with the United Nations for the promotion of the interest of the children. The reports issued by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative and the documents emanating from the Working Group should follow from clear, accurate, verifiable and up-to-date data. It is therefore important that gaps in the reporting process that have been identified be addressed. Old data must be discarded. The Philippines raised that issue with the Working Group. The observation has to be translated into appropriate recommendations. The Security Council must be cognizant and address those gaps. The integrity of the reports and work of the Security Council and everybody else involved rests, in fact, on such basic requirements.

Let me also bring to the fore additional points that need to be highlighted and commented on. We acknowledge and are grateful for the due recognition given to the positive developments that have taken place in the Philippines. Those institutional and legal developments need to be appreciated in the larger context of inclusive and sustainable growth and the peace and development agenda of my Government. It is a delicate balance that we in the Philippines are trying to achieve. The work carried out here on children should support the work that is being done at the country level.

The Philippines also wishes to take exception to the statement in the report of the Working Group, recognizing that

> "children's vulnerability to violations and abuses committed by parties to the armed conflict might have increased in areas in the Philippines affected by Typhoon Haiyan, and urging relevant international governmental and non-governmental agencies working in affected areas to bear this risk in mind" (*S/AC.51/2014/1, para. 6 (d)*).

My delegation wishes to know the factual basis of that statement. It bears noting that Typhoon Haiyan — the strongest typhoon ever recorded in history to hit landfall — while cutting a huge swathe through the country, significantly affected provinces in the Visayas region, not in Mindanao. Those are not areas of operation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, with which we have forged a lasting solution and which might be slighted by those reports or comments, or the Abu Sayyaf Group or other armed bands. Previous reports of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General will bear that out.

There were a number of nasty reports that came out at the time, including on the trafficking of children, but all had shaky factual bases; such reports came out to advance the specific interests and hidden agendas of certain groups — but not the armed groups. I would refer, for instance, to the report that relief goods and medicines from the United Kingdom were diverted to private distributors or markets outside the calamity-stricken areas for private gain, but there were no such distributors in kind from the United Kingdom. Given the very real challenges that confront my nation's reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, such speculative statements are quite insensitive and outright irresponsible. Thet are a disservice to the thousands of children in the typhoon-affected areas who need all the help they can get at this very crucial time.

I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for visiting the calamity-stricken areas and the international community — including the countries of my region and those represented here — for the very kind support they have extended to my Government, their relief efforts, and their assistance the recovery, reconstruction and development of the affected areas.

My Government wishes to inform the Council that the fourth and final annex on the Bangsamoro was recently signed. It is the last the 12 annexes of the comprehensive framework agreement that was signed more than two years ago. Throughout that period, there has been tranquility in the area other than isolated cases of violence. By the end of this month, the comprehensive agreement will be signed.

Allow me to reiterate the position of the Philippine Government. We value the sanctity of every human life, particularly the lives of our children and youth. Our position is unchanged — the situation in the Philippines does not warrant any inclusion on the list. The concrete developments and the concerns we have descrived, including on data and reporting, should be taken into full account. The Philippines offers more positive lessons learned and points of advancement rather than setbacks, which warrant our exclusion from the list.

The operational activities of the United Nations could provide concrete instruments for the promotion of the interests of the children. It would in fact be an indication of failure on the part of the Security Council, even on an issue that is very important but of tangentional concern to the Council, if no final action were taken with respect to those countries on the list that are clearly not in situations of armed conflict. The appropriate agencies or United Nations operational activities can do more, instead, to secure the improvement of the situation of children in those countries and free up the Security Council to engage in the larger and more pressing issues of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank you, Madam President, for having organized this open debate on children and armed conflict, taking into account the ongoing efforts in the campaign to end child recruitment by the end of 2016, launched yesterday with the participation of our delegation.

Issues related to protection of the rights of children constitute a major priority for the Government of the Sudan, as evidenced by a number of efforts and achievements by the Government. To give a few examles only, first, concerning its international commitments, my country has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It has also ratified International Labour Organization Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138, on the minimum age for admission to employment and work, and ILO Convention No. 182, on the worst forms of child labour.

Secondly, at the national level, the laws governing the armed forces, police and security services categorically prohibit the recruitment of children under the age of 18 in their ranks. My country has established an integrated system of justice and corrections for minors, including the 2010 law on child protection, and the creation of a competent prosecutor's office to that end.

Thirdly, with respect to child protection mechanisms, the Government has established units for the protection of children and and the family within the military forces and the Ministry of the Interior. It has also established a national council for children and appointed a prosecutor for crimes perpetrated in Darfur in order to investigate all allegations since the onset of the conflict in 2003, particularly claims related to violations of the rights of children. The Government has also established a fact-finding committee on the abduction and recruitment of children in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. In July 2013, it launched a 10-year comprehensive national plan to promote human rights in the Sudan.

Fourthly, with respect to the engagement with the relevant United Nations bodies, through its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, the Government of the Sudan has remained in constant contact with the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, with a view to addressing all child-related concerns.

The Government of the Sudan is also making ongoing efforts to improve the situation of children. In that regard, over the past few weeks, the Sudanese national child-care council has set up a national coordinating task force on children in emergency situations, including all the relevant actors and bodies working on this important question. One of the most important mandates of the task force is to ensure child protection, deal with cases of children in emergency situations and coordinate with UNICEF and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Similarly, in June 2013, the national child-care council organized a symposium on local cultures focused on protecting children, including when it comes to recruitment. The symposium was aimed at the following objectives.

The first aim was to enhance awareness of international principles and standards on the protection of children; bring into play the role of the media with regard to local cultures that favour the recruitment of children, as well as underscore the role of civil society and scientific institutions in this connection; and prepare the launch of an information campaign to promote the goals of the symposium, which will be coordinated with the UNICEF office in Khartoum. The campaign will send outreach messages with the participation of the local community leadership and women's groups. Work is under way with various relevant agencies for the completion of the action plan on children and armed conflict.

Given the policies that I have mentioned and the practical steps we have taken in that regard, we call for removing the Sudan from the list of countries annexed to the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

My delegation would like to draw attention to the following points that need to be taken into account if we want the debate on children and armed conflict to be inclusive comprehensive.

First, Governments suffering from conflict must be assisted in their efforts to end them, by persuading and compelling armed rebel groups to put down their arms and turn to negotiation as a means to settle their differences.

Secondly, the root causes of the presence of children in the military must be addressed, alongside the root causes of conflicts, by eradicating poverty, dealing with the impacts of climate change, lifting the unfair unilateral economic sanctions imposed on certain States, including the Sudan, and cancelling the debts of developing countries and proving them with technical support and capacity-bulding , particularly in the areas of education and post-conflict reconstruction.

Thirdly, the fact that rebel movements are signing on to action plans to end child recruitment is not enough. Such measures must be backed up with condemnation of the behaviour of rebel groups, which must also be forced to lay down their arms and pursue negotiations. Fourthly, Governments must take part in any efforts relating to the issue of children in conflict, transparently and on a basis of national sovereignty.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its commitment to continuing to cooperate with all United Nations bodies dealing with children, and calls for the Secretary-General's reports to include correct and verifiable information based on objective and impartial sources, about which Governments must be consulted before that information is incorporated into official reports.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): I would like to join other delegations that spoke before me in extending our sincere congratulations to you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of March. In the same vein, I wish to thank you on behalf of my delegation for convening today's open debate on the very important theme of children and armed conflict.

We thank the Secretary-General for his latest annual report (S/2013/245), which not only highlights the progress that has been made in protecting children in countries affected by conflict, but also documents how the evolving character of war is creating unprecedented risks for our children. We are also encouraged by the Security Council's continued focus on the subject and wish to emphasize the need for greater and more systematic attention to be paid to the agenda of children and armed conflict in the Council's own work.

Recognizing that ending violations of the rights of children is a moral imperative that we must collectively commit to achieving, Botswana reaffirms the importance it attaches to the protection and promotion of the rights of children, including in the context of armed conflict. To that end, we strongly support all efforts aimed at protecting the rights of children, including the mandate and work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, among others. My delegation also welcomes yesterday's launch of the "Children, not soldiers" campaign organized by UNICEF, the Special Representative and the Luxembourg Permanent Mission. We believe the launch was timely and will go a long way to complementing ongoing efforts to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

Despite the commendable progress highlighted in the report, we remain deeply concerned that children continue to be recruited, killed, maimed, sexually abused and deprived of their childhood and their right to education and health care, among other things. It is disheartening to note that in some ongoing crises, such acts have become systematic and widespread. In line with the principle of the responsibility to protect, Botswana believes that States have primary responsibility for protecting their own populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including protecting children from the risk of war.

My delegation also wishes to reiterate that impunity for violations against children is unacceptable and must never be tolerated. In that regard, we wish to stress the urgency and importance of enhancing political will and commitment in order to address the tragic plight of children in armed conflict. To that end, a focus on national ownership and responsibility, and on engagement with concerned Governments and armed groups to establish commitments to accountability, as well as the systematic monitoring of such commitments, represents the highest possible priority and importance for my delegation. We therefore call on the Security Council to continue its efforts to fight impunity and enforce accountability, including by adopting targeted measures against persistent perpetrators of violations against children and their referral to the International Criminal Court.

Regarding the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, we believe that allowing the access necessary for reaching vulnerable populations, particularly children in situations of armed conflict, is essential.

Botswana believes that strengthening global efforts to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict should be consistent with and complementary to wider efforts to promote the implementation of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict and of other resolutions regarding the promotion and protection of the rights of children. In that regard, we welcome several States' significant efforts to implement those resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005) and 2068 (2012), and believe that they should continue to be vigorously pursued. We also share the view that such efforts should be supported so as to strengthen national capacities for child protection, investigation and prosecution and accountability mechanisms, as well as the establishment of age verification processes in military recruitment.

As the well-known children's rights activist, Graça Machel, once said, "The impact of armed conflict on children must be everyone's concern and is everyone's responsibility" (*A/51/306, para. 317*). We remain optimistic that given our collective will and responsibility, we can bring an end to the shameful crimes currently prevailing against children.

To conclude, we welcome the adoption today of resolution 2143 (2014) on children and armed conflict. Its adoption by consensus indicates the willingness of Council members and, indeed, the general membership of the United Nations, to move ahead on this agenda and focus on areas that have not received much attention in the past.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Samvelian (Armenia) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to say how pleased we are to see Luxembourg presiding over the Security Council, and to express our gratitude to you, Madam President, for organizing this open debate on an issue that is so important to the United Nations and its Member States. We are also grateful to Luxembourg, and its Permanent Mission in particular, for launching the "Children, not soldiers" campaign.

(*spoke in English*)

My delegation would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Mr. Anthony Lake, the Executive Director of UNICEF, and Ms. Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for their briefings earlier today.

In recent years the evolving character of armed conflict has created unprecedented threats to children. They have become more vulnerable, particularly due to new tactics in warfare — an absence of clear battlefields, the increasing numbers and diversification of parties to conflicts, which add to conflicts' complexity, and the deliberate targeting of safe havens such as hospitals and schools. Conflict deprives children of their parents, caregivers, basic social services, health care and education. Civilians, including child soldiers, should be spared war's devastation, and no civilian losses should be forgotten or overlooked.

There was no outright ban on child soldiers under international law until fairly recently.

Both the additional 1977 Protocol I of the Geneva Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibit States from recruiting soldiers under the age of 15. However, there was no prohibition against children choosing to fight in conflict. The situation changed from the year 2000 and onward when the United Nations authorized a special tribunal to prosecute those with the greater responsibility of violations of international humanitarian law, including the use of child soldiers. Compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law, with their emphasis on special protection for children, remains the key to preventing grave violations against children. In that resepct, in 2005 Armenia ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and strongly supports the activities of the Committee and the wider United Nations system in that regard.

However, it is regrettable that, notwithstanding the fact that the legal regulation of the rights of children and their involvement in armed conflict has been significantly strengthened and affirmed, the substantive use of child soldiers in armed conflicts still continues to take place. Children in conflict are separated from their families, are forced to kill and experience violence and abuse. Ending impunity for grave violations against children is crucial. Recruiting child soldiers constitutes a war crime and the perpertrators of such crimes must be held accountable.

While the promotion and protection of the rights of all children is a priority concern of States Members of the United Nations, Armenia believes that particular attention should be paid to projects specifically related to disarmament, reintegration and rehabilitation, including psychosocial work. The promotion of peace is in the overriding responsibility of all countries, as well as of the Council. As long as armed conflicts are a reality, we have a duty to promote the protection and to defend the rights of the most vulnerable — the children. The United Nations system as a whole has a role to play in that regard, and we owe it to the children of the world to mobilize the full potential of that system.

In conclusion, let me commend the efforts of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Office does impressive work in raising awareness and in mobilizing strong support for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

In that connection, let me also make a reference to the statement of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Leila Zerrougui made during the presentation of her annual report in the autumn of 2013 to the General Assembly, which fully reflects the position of Armenia on the issue discussed. She said that constructive engagement with Member States in collaboration with child protection partners was crucial to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children; no one could single-handedly accomplish the difficult task of addressing the impact of conflict on children; and that Member States, the United Nations and civil society partners had to support each other for the sake of children affected by conflict and to include children's needs in peace agreements and in broader peacebuilding recovery and development initiatives.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Moura (Portugal): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict, which is an issue to which Portugal attaches great importance.

Let me start by thanking today's briefers for their presentations. I take this opportunity to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, for her briefing. I take this occasion to commend her work and efforts to ensure the protection of children in situations of ongoing armed conflict.

Portugal fully supports the "Children, not soldiers" campaign launched by the Special Representative yesterday with UNICEF and in collaboration with Luxembourg and other United Nations partners.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, but I would like to underline some aspects of particular significance to my country.

Portugal bears a strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and to international humanitarian law. The first debate held in the Council on the issue of children and armed conflict was, in fact, promoted by my country in 1998 (see S/PV.3896). We were then already convinced, as we remain today, that the issue has serious implications for international peace and security.

We welcome the Security Council's commitment to addressing the grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict and the progress achieved over the years with the adoption of a number of resolutions that have reinforced the mechanisms to deal with that pressing issue. Despite the significant progress and establishment of a strong normative framework and a mechanism to monitor, report and respond to grave violations against children, huge challenges remain, due in particular to the changing nature of conflicts.

It is troublesome that in his latest report (S/2013/245), the Secretary-General notes the increasing trend of the use of schools for military purposes, as well as attacks on education. We are gravely concerned about widespread and intentional attacks against schools, teachers and students as an instrument of war. As a recent study launched by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack demonstrates, there is a very concerning pattern of deliberate attacks against education perpetrated by armed non-State groups, State military and security forces and armed criminal groups in more than 70 countries. Schools and education facilities are being systematically used as bases, barracks, weapons caches, detention centres and even torture chambers by regular armed forces and armed non-State opposition groups. Hence, education infrastructures become strategic targets of attack, putting children and teachers at risk and denying children their right to an education.

As we sit here today, children are being forced out of their classrooms and playgrounds and such attacks not only affect children and communities as a whole but also should affect our consciousness. In Syria, more than 2,500 schools were damaged or destroyed by April last year, and the number now exceeds 3,000. We urge all Member States to act to protect schools, teachers and students from attack and to hold perpetrators accountable. We salute the efforts of Luxembourg, as Chair of the Working Group, to agree on tangible measures aimed at preventing the attacks on education and the military use of schools and to ensure the accountability of perpetrators.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) continues to play a fundamental deterrent role, complementary to the roles of tribunals at the national and international levels, by holding perpetrators accountable and by investigating and prosecuting those responsible for committing atrocities against children. The need to tackle impunity regarding persistent perpetrators already clearly identified should certainly guide our work in the near future. It is striking that we are referring to individuals or entities that have been identified as persistent perpetrators for five years or more, most of whom are non-State actors. It is the credibility of the system that we have built that is at stake. The Council needs to address those difficult cases and to ensure that such individuals are accounted for and sanctioned. Further institutional dialogue between the ICC and the Security Council is fundamental in that regard.

On peacekeeping operations, Portugal strongly supports the inclusion of child protection advisers in mandates. It is fundamental that in scenarios of hopelessness, such as armed conflicts, United Nations peacekeepers on the ground are a symbol of the core values of respect and protection of human right for which the Organization strives. In this sense, predeployment training in child protection for peacekeepers, and the effective screening of peacekeepers to ensure that individuals who have committed grave violations against children do not serve with the United Nations, are essential. It is particularly paradoxical that, in spite of the existence of normative international instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most inclusive of all instruments of international law, children continue to be the main victims of armed violence, being injured, raped and killed.

Let me conclude by saying that Member States and the Security Council share the common responsibility for taking collective action to overcome this scourge. Protecting children in armed conflict requires the commitment of the international community as a whole, and my country is fully dedicated to this objective.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Huseynli (Azerbaijan): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important and timely open debate on children and armed conflict. Let me also commend the active role and leadership of Luxembourg in advancing this issue in the work of the Security Council.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative Leila Zerrougui, the Executive Director of UNICEF and the other speakers for their presentations and insights and for sharing experiences that can hardly leave anyone in this Chamber indifferent to the gross violations committed against children and their unspeakable suffering during armed conflict. We join the call for efforts to be stepped up at all levels to reduce the grave impact of conflicts on children and upholding justice by bringing to account those who perpetrate crimes against children.

Azerbaijan remains deeply concerned by the negative impact of conflict on children and strongly condemns all violations of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law committed against them. Azerbaijan's principled position with regard to the protection of civilians, including children, in situations of armed conflict is based on a strong interest in contributing to the protection of human right and fundamental freedoms and to the achievement of sustainable peace and development. In doing so, my country proceeds from its practical experience in addressing the devastating consequences of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed during the war waged against my country. It is a well-known fact that today Azerbaijan continues to suffer from the presence of high numbers of refugees and displaced persons, many of whom are children.

The consistent attention of the international community, in particular the United Nations, to the problem has been crucial in developing and applying measures to prevent and respond to violations and abuses committed against children. Azerbaijan remains committed to continuing to support the activities of existing United Nations mechanisms aimed at ensuring more effective protection for the rights of children and improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

Important steps have been taken in a number of situations of armed conflict to achieve accountability for grave violations of children's rights, including the development of the international legal framework. However, serious challenges remain. Among them is the continued lack of proper attention and responses at both the international and regional levels to the violation of international humanitarian and human rights law in some situations of armed conflict.

It is obvious that more resolute and targeted measures are required to protect children in situations of armed conflict and to end impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community perpetrated against children. Combatting impunity is important not only for the purposes of prosecuting such crimes and bringing those responsible to justice, but also for ensuring sustainable peace, truth and reconciliation.

Particular consideration should be given to internally displaced children in terms of ensuring their inalienable right of return and to the implications of illegal policies and practices in situations of foreign occupation for the protection of children's rights. In addition, determining the fate of children taken hostage and reported missing in situations of armed conflict, as well as searching for them and their reunification with families are other layers of the problem requiring urgent action.

I would like to conclude by welcoming the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014) today, which demonstrates the Council's continued determination to address the problem in a comprehensive and by focusing on its most salient aspects.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested the floor to make an additional statement. I give her the floor.

Ms. Alsaleh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We very much appreciate your giving us the floor for the second time at this meeting, Madam President. We are taking the floor to respond to the allegations in the statement by the representative of the Qatari regime, which has now become isolated and ostracized even by its closest allies in the Arab Gulf.

If the representative of Qatar were truly concerned for the children of Syria and their lives, she would have asked her ruling family to stop the sectarian narrative of instigation launched from their territory through their local and and satellite television channels. Such a narrative — for her information, of course — is what sends jihadists from the world over to Syria to perpetrate the most abhorrent forms of killing, slaughter and rape against Syrian children. I believe that the decision by Qatar's neighbouring States to withdraw their Ambassadors in protest of Qatar's narrative is the strongest proof of the ignominous and brutal methodology adopted by the Qatari sheikhdom in altering facts, inciting sectarian conflict and instigating the murder of Syrian children from a distance.

Those who claim that they are concerned for human rights in States worldwide should set an example in this area. Today, I do not want to remind the representative of Qatar of the remarks by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Gabriela Knaul, about the persistence of a judicial system that flouts the human rights of non-Qatari nationals in Qatar and which is not independent because of interference by the Qatari executive branch, in particular by major companies and the members of the ruling family.

Today, everybody is aware of the role played by the Qatari regime, which sponsors international terrorism. Facts are unfolding about the involvement of the Qatari regime in bombings in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. In addition, we have seen the closing down of the mouthpiece of the Qatari regime, the Al-Jazeera channel, in a number of capitals around the world, following evidence about its involvement in stirring up public opinion and conveying a distorted picture about what is happening in the world. It is no secret that this channel has been covering, for several decades, the activities of Al-Qaida and Taliban movements. We reserve the right to hold these people accountable for their crimes, which have been documented by the United Nations in the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Finally, I should like to recall the well-known Arabic saying, which applies to the Qatari regime and its representatives: "If you have no shame, then do whatever you wish".

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.